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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 20 April 2000

Jeudi 20 avril 2000



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 20 April 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 20 avril 2000

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

FUNERAL DIRECTORS AND ESTABLISHMENTS AMENDMENT ACT (FUNERAL SERVICES), 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES DIRECTEURS DE SERVICES FUNÉRAIRES ET LES ÉTABLISSEMENTS FUNÉRAIRES (SERVICES FUNÉRAIRES)

Mr Sergio moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 54, An Act to amend the Funeral Directors and Establishments Act with respect to funeral services /
Projet de loi 54, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les directeurs de services funéraires et les établissements funéraires à l'égard des services funéraires.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): As I begin to address the content of my private member's bill, let me say that this is not a very exotic topic, but nonetheless it is of the utmost importance. It requires, it protects, it ensures that every neighbourhood, every community is protected from unlicensed, unsupervised, unregulated, uninspected and unscrupulous funeral establishments.

The Funeral Directors and Establishments Act regulates the body governing autonomously, if you will, licensing funeral establishments. It is a well-run and respected profession. My comments and my bill deal strictly and directly with the licensing of the funeral homes themselves, not with monetary issues, not with the economics of the business. I won't touch that at all. I know there is a lot of commotion out there. It is a big business. I won't venture into dealing in uncharted waters.

But the act is silent when it comes to establishments calling themselves funeral centres, funeral parlours, visiting centres or visiting assembly halls. The act does not address this particular problem. Churches are not part of that as they are non-profit organizations. Therefore, churches will continue to do last rites or funeral masses, as they have been doing all along.

My intention with this bill is to close this loophole, to close the gap. It is to bring an amendment to the Funeral

Directors and Establishments Act whereby any funeral establishment is licensed; be it a funeral centre or a funeral or a visiting centre, they must be licensed. It is important that any funeral centre, any funeral home or any funeral establishment is indeed licensed, adheres to the ethics of the profession, to the standards of the profession, is subject to all licence requirements and is inspected on a regulation basis.

In the time of bereavement, the general public should not be questioning whether a funeral establishment is a funeral home or a funeral centre or a visiting centre. I believe the public should not be expected to know the difference. At the same time, the last thing a consumer wants to face at the most delicate of times is that the services are being bungled by a shabby operator.

We have to move on. This is an area a lot of people have concerns about, where the peace and quiet of every community, every neighbourhood, is at stake. What I intend to do with my bill is to make sure that the profession continues to operate in a professional way, adhering to standards and ethics, that neighbourhoods are protected at the same time and that any funeral establishment, called by any other name, is fully licensed, adheres to all laws and is subject to all conditions, standards and inspections from all levels of government.

I was quite encouraged by a letter I got from the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, from which I'd like to read a quote. This is in answer to a letter I sent to him. It says, "I share your interest in ensuring that consumers are afforded a high level of consumer protection by ensuring that funeral services are regulated and that industry practitioners are held to a set of high business standards." I want no more and no less, exactly that. This is not a partisan political issue. My bill is to clean up something that over the years the act has neglected to look at.

The Red Tape Commission, I believe, is now a permanent commission. While I'm very encouraged by the comments of the minister and I hope he will support my bill and help us and help me move it along to the next step, I have to say that the Red Tape Commission has not met—with all their good intentions, and I'm sure they have a lot on their plate—since prior to the last provincial election, since last spring. So with all their good intentions, that commission is moving at less than a snail's pace. This is an issue that we are responsible, as members elected at large by the public, for dealing with, to bring peace and quiet to every community and let our people know that when they call, we answer their call.

When we go to the Red Tape Commission, I have to say, yes, I would love to see my bill move ahead, but at this stage I am neither greedy nor presumptuous to say I'm asking my colleagues, the members in the House, for second and third reading today, although I would love to; I'm saying that if there are other areas to look at to make the bill better, to make the present act better, then let's move it along to the next step, to the next stage, where everyone concerned—funeral directors and establishments and other interested parties such as churches and the public in general—will have an opportunity to come forward and express their views. But it's something we cannot shove under the rug. Communities are waiting for us to act, because it is a serious problem.

The public believes that it is not acceptable, that it is not proper that a body has been prepared, embalmed, whatever you may want to call it, in a particular place and then transported to another, unlicensed location. That is not acceptable.

The intent of my bill is to do exactly that, so that there is no skirting of the law here, so that the public gets what it's entitled to get, and that is ensuring protection from the unscrupulous operator. I won't delve into the municipalities area either, and if the local municipality through its zoning and planning requirements allows a funeral home, so be it. We, as provincial legislators, want to deal with licensing those particular establishments. That is the main intent of my private member's bill. When people, when the community, when the public wave a red flag, it's up to us as legislators to act, to move into the action, if you will, listen to them, respond to their concern and act. That is why we are here, to legislate when concerns are brought to our attention.

In concluding, because 10 minutes fly away very easily, I'm saying to the members of the House that this is not a political issue, that it's not political partisanship here, that it is something that affects everyone in the House and every community, every neighbourhood in Ontario. I'm saying, let's move it along. Let's go to the next step and hear from people who perhaps will bring forward other concerns with respect to the contacts, the operation of the funeral homes and establishments in general.

I would like to see, and I think the members of the House would like to see, everyone have the opportunity to come forward to the public hearing process of the various committees we have at our disposal and have an opportunity to address those meetings and bring to us any other concerns.

1010

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my privilege to respond to the member from York West, Mr Sergio, on his Bill 54 amendments to the Funeral Directors and Establishments Act. He has made a number of points and as the parliamentary assistant I'm going to respond in a formal sense here, but I will also veer off the script a bit and personalize the concern. In many respects I completely appreciate and understand the initiative Mr Sergio is taking.

Bill 54 proposes to add a new section to the Funeral Directors and Establishments Act. The proposed amendments would prohibit anyone from holding bereavement ceremonies on a for-profit basis, aside from a licensed funeral establishment; a cemetery or a crematorium that has been approved under the Cemeteries Act; a location at which bereavement ceremonies are held four or fewer times per year; and small communities within the province where failure to allow services to be provided would prove a hardship to the local population.

The Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations has responsibility for cemeteries and funeral legislation in Ontario. As PA, it's my duty to comment on and respond to this particular proposal as it has been put forward in Bill 54, and the ministry has found that it does not truly represent the best interests of the people of the province at this time.

However, that being said, at the request of the ministry, the Red Tape Commission was asked to review and for some time has been reviewing this issue. In fact, it's been an issue since the last time changes were made in the 1990s. Mr Gary Stewart, MPP for Peterborough, and Marcel Beaubien were asked in the previous government to conduct consultations. I can assure you that Mr Stewart, as a former funeral director, is fully aware of the issues and of how controversial this issue really is. I think it's important for us to be talking about it today. Mr Bob Wood and Frank Sheehan, who co-chaired the Red Tape Commission, are in the process of consultations with stakeholders in the group, and a number of issues in the death care sector are important.

The Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the Honourable Bob Runciman, has requested the commission to review the rules governing the sector and provide him with recommendations. The commission has already engaged in consultations, as has been said by Mr Sergio, with the stakeholders in the bereavement sector, including cemetery owners, funeral service providers, industry associations, monument builders and some community organizations.

It may seem strange to think of funeral services as a changing industry but in fact it is changing. For example, an increasing number of people are opting for cremations. Also, the increasingly multicultural nature of our society in Ontario has introduced a variety of new and somewhat different traditions to the business area.

The issue that Bill 54 attempts to address is often referred to as the visitation centre issue, where we have a visitation centre on an existing cemetery providing a lot of the services the traditional funeral home provided.

Within my riding of Durham I personally consulted with Cory Kuipers, who operates a funeral home; Mr Paul Morris, Morris funeral home in Bowmanville; Carl Goode from Newcastle Funeral Home; Myles Oriordan of Wagg Funeral Home in Port Perry; as well as Mr Harry Rath, who has long been known as an important contributor, presently employed by Lowen Group, but who has worked in the private and not-for-profit sector as well, a very knowledgeable individual. I sat with him and

understood some of the dynamics and the importance of being patient and having balanced change at this time.

I understand that visitation centres are not clearly addressed in the existing legislation, and that does present a loophole and indeed the problem from which arises this particular Bill 54. This has contributed to the controversy between cemeteries and funeral providers.

Besides the other issues of the for-profit and not-for-profit, the churches and the rest of it, it gets a little confusing, for who's really hiding and who's really paying taxes? Is the playing field level, or the cemetery plot level, so to speak. It is due to this controversy that the Red Tape Commission has become involved in consulting with all the stakeholders to try and find a solution that works for everyone.

However, visitation centres represent only one issue, and there are many others, as I said before. When the Red Tape Commission has completed its review of the issues, they are expected to provide suggestions on how to improve legislation governing the bereavement sector. However, we must ensure that any changes we make will fully benefit the people they are intended to help, and the way to do this isn't by dealing with the legislation in a piecemeal fashion, as perhaps is done here.

I might say, without being critical, there is a section in there that I need to have explained to me because, as it's currently written and structured, it just doesn't make any sense at all. Again, not being a lawyer, I'm quite surprised by the language in the proposed legislation.

First, and most important, we have to make sure the legislation will protect the consumer's ability to receive bereavement services in a professional and caring manner, which has been the tradition they've been accustomed to and expect in the future, remembering that often these purchases are being made at the most difficult time in their individual lives, their families' lives, and at the most vulnerable time in their lives—often elderly people dealing in a difficult time, difficult situation. Pre-arranged funerals are a big part of the business. Life insurance policies now are being sold with pre-sold funeral arrangements. These are creating the necessity to make amendments to the legislation. We also want to ensure that the new legislation will address the major issues that will face the death care industry well into the new millennium.

For that reason, I'm unfortunately unable to support Bill 54 and urge the assembly to reject the private member's bill, not for any personal reasons but to pressure the government to continue its consultations, bringing forward an improved piece of legislation addressing this very controversial issue.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I'll be sharing this time with the members for Prince Edward-Hastings and Elgin-Middlesex-London.

I'm pleased to stand this morning to support my colleague from York West in this private member's bill which will amend the Funeral Directors and Establishments Act with respect to funeral services.

It has been said, and perhaps will be said again, that certainly funerals—the conducting of funerals, the offering of funeral services—are most definitely a business. But it's a business and a service that's provided to citizens of Ontario when they are at their most vulnerable. It's a very solemn business. It's a very solemn process that is gone through.

You know, there are a number of bills that are put before this Legislature that we have varying views on, and in fact not all of them touch everybody in society. But it's a natural fact that when it comes to funerals, at some point in time all of us will be involved and it will touch all of our lives.

What the member for York West has pointed out is that we have a problem. It's been suggested, and I suspect it's been suggested in a positive way, that the government be pressured to have legislation that will do what this member's bill is going to do, as well as some others.

1020

It's also been pointed out by the member for York West, the sponsor of this bill, that we don't know when the Red Tape Commission will handle this. We don't know when it will become a priority on the government's agenda. That's what private members' business is for. It's for individual members of the Legislature to bring matters before us that maybe aren't of an emergent nature when it comes to the government. What we're asking you to do is support this. If the government chooses at a later date to further amend the funeral directors act, well, then, fine. So be it. That will be done in its time.

The member for York West is coming to the assistance, if you like, of many vulnerable people in the province. He's coming to their assistance at a time when they might not necessarily receive the service that they think they are entitled to receive and that they are paying for. I believe it's part of the government's responsibility—this is no doubt agreed by all—that there are times when the consumer does have to be protected. I can't think of any time that would be better to look at protection than when someone is bereaving, when they've lost a loved one, a family member, and when they need to know that those they are dealing with are fully licensed, fully trained to carry out the service they're going to provide.

I, along with many of the government members, want government to intercede in our lives as little as possible. But I don't see this as an intrusion, quite frankly. I see it as an aid to citizens in our society. I would hope that other members of the government side take this into consideration when, later this morning, we vote on this piece of legislation. As is often said even about government legislation, it's not perfect but it's a step in the right direction. What we're saying this morning, in support of my colleague from York West, is that there may be more that should be done. We may find that there is more that should be done to protect the consumer. But this is a step in the right direction. Therefore, I don't think that just because there may be more to be done is a reason to defeat this bill. In fact, since it's a step in the right direction, I think that's all the more reason it should be supported.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I am very pleased to join in the debate with respect to the bill before us, Bill 54, which is entitled An Act to amend the Funeral Directors and Establishments Act with respect to funeral services.

I just want to comment on the bill. It's not a very long bill, but I think the general intent of my friend's piece of legislation is aimed at something that happened within his riding.

The funeral and cemetery sectors in Ontario, as you know, Mr Speaker, face a great many challenges in the years to come. We want to be certain that any legislative reform that continues to help the death care industry develop responsibly is complete and responsible. Bill 54 doesn't achieve that.

One of the provisions of Bill 54 would limit some locations to holding only four or fewer funeral ceremonies each year. This proposed amendment could restrict the holding of bereavement ceremonies and rites at Legion halls, community centres and other local establishments, which would clearly not be in the interests of many Ontario communities. And why four? I would add that the member from Peterborough says also churches, that this would limit it to churches also in terms of holding ceremonies. I would say, why four ceremonies per year?

How would you feel if you were told you couldn't grant your war veteran uncle's dying wish to hold a service at the Legion because there had already been four funerals there this year? I know that from personal experience, having had my uncle, who was a war veteran and president of the Legion, pass away just recently.

This government is committed to ensuring that Ontario's death care legislation remains current. The last changes to the act were over a decade ago. The current act takes into account the tendency towards pre-purchase of bereavement services and the provision of non-traditional funerals and basic low-cost funerals. It also protects consumers by providing an opportunity to cancel prepaid services, which helps ensure that consumers aren't talked into something grander than they would normally have purchased. It also allows flexibility if the consumer needs or wants change. Although the current legislation provides many benefits to consumers and businesses, new issues are arising, and the Red Tape Commission's review of Ontario's bereavement legislation will lead the path to the future.

Any new legislation must respond to the realities of a new, electronically driven marketplace. In the marketplace of the new millennium, the corporations, both for-profit and not-for-profit, involved in the death care industry are very different and much more sophisticated than those of the past. Any new legislation that regulates and guides them must be carefully developed, with a thorough understanding of the wishes of all stakeholders, including the interests of consumers across the province as well as the death care industry itself. The approach taken by the Red Tape Commission in its review of the

bereavement sector is the type that would yield effective legislation.

I understand the member's interest in this piece of legislation. I understand his reasons, certainly arising out of a single situation in his own riding, which is unfortunate. But my big concern on this bill, as I've indicated earlier, is limiting to some locations the holding of four or fewer funeral ceremonies each year. As I said, the proposed amendment could restrict the holding of bereavement ceremonies and rights at Legion halls, community centres, churches and other local establishments, which would clearly not be in the interest of many Ontario communities. Certainly as a member who represents a rural component, Bradford-West Gwillimbury and Innisfil, that just doesn't sit well with my constituents, I can tell you. We are very community oriented and you find that ceremonies are held in churches and Legions.

I can't support this legislation for the reasons I have provided.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm pleased to rise and support this bill. I too have read it; it is not very lengthy. In the community I come from, I have attended funerals in homes, churches, schools and Legions. This does not preclude that. The key word in this bill is that it is "for-profit." I have not been present at any of those where it has been a for-profit function. I am pleased that it discontinues allowing that, because rural communities value the opportunity to have a funeral in a place that is special to the family and to the deceased.

As an individual—and I draw on my own life's memories—I was in grade 13 when my mother passed away. I think I can reflect the feeling that everyone goes through when they lose a loved one, and that is that life seemed to stop for a little while. I have some memories, but not complete memories, of that event. I know from my siblings and from my father that it was a time of distress and a time when we relied on others. We had a faith and a belief that the funeral home was licensed and would do the right thing, would show the proper respect, would follow the regulations, and that happened. Because of that, the memory I have is that we focused on the loss of our mother rather than difficulties with the funeral industry, because there were none. We knew that this particular home was following the law as it existed.

This past January I lost my father. This has been a little bit of a different experience because my father donated his body to medical science, to a university. There was no funeral home involved, and there was no funeral as such. That brought out different emotions—the first emotion of pride. My father was a strong believer in his country and served for six years during the Second World War. He was strongly committed to his community, strongly committed to bettering others. I have a great deal of admiration and respect for him. I believe that the donation of his body to the university was the right thing to do, and I'm proud of him for that.

1030

But it also invoked in me the emotions of, how was his body being handled, is it being treated with dignity and is

it being treated with respect? I know it is. I have every confidence it is. But it still bothers me that it is other than the traditional, and I needed the assurance of exactly what would happen and what would follow and that there would ultimately be a funeral. For survivors after the loss of a loved one, it is their last opportunity to show their love and respect for the person they have lost. They need to have the assurance that the funeral home they're dealing with is going to do the right thing. The right things don't necessarily always happen automatically. The right things happen because of professionalism, because people have had the training, because people know the regulations, because there is governance and there is inspection and regulation. I believe that mandates that the funeral industry needs to be undertaken by professionals who are licensed and follow the law.

If we go to the possibility that could happen, as inferred by this bill, that for-profit organizations can set up and operate a facility for funerals that is not a funeral home, if they do not take the appropriate action, if they make a mistake, if they learn what to do off a learning curve, saying, "We'll make a few mistakes, but eventually we'll get it right," there are absolutely horrid memories for the family that is left. The family needs to have the assurance of absolutely no worries or no concerns. They need to focus on their loss. They need to have absolute confidence in it.

That's all this bill does. Maybe a review of the act will change it in years to come, but each and every day there is a family that could potentially fall victim to inappropriate treatment or an inappropriate ceremony.

The member for York West has brought this forward not for one specific incident. I believe we need to learn from experience and say that we need to ensure that the people in Ontario, both the deceased and the remaining family and friends, have every assurance that things will be done the right way. This is important.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I've got to tell you, I'm not an expert on these matters. I bring no expertise, and I've got to admit—

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Sit down.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, you're quite right. He's asking me to therefore sit down. But I've got to tell you, I stay away from funeral homes as often as I can, because I'm afraid. So my expertise is experiential to the extent that I have to go every now and then, but that's about it.

On this matter, I have some knowledge but not in great detail. Mr Sergio says the facility that opened up in his community is the first to use a legal loophole and operate without a licence, and it's because of this that it's here. I also know that my former colleague M. George Mammoliti, who has since joined the Liberal Party, people should know that—God bless, I've got no problem with that. He's actively involved in this particular matter and has been for quite a number of years.

Mr Sergio: As a local councillor.

Mr Marchese: As a local councillor, of course. He has led people to believe that he could have stopped this

operation from existing and/or operating. My only problem is that this operation was able to get a permit under the zoning bylaws at the time—it's my understanding, Mr Sergio—was able to get this operation established under the zoning rules of the day, meaning three years ago or so. Then what happened was that they were able to slap on what's called an interim control bylaw that simply says, "Hold on here, you can't go any further."

So this fellow, Mr Marchi, the brother of Sergio Marchi, the former Liberal minister, is having to go to all sorts of different places—the OMB. They said, "No, it's not our problem here," at the Ontario Municipal Board, "You've got to go to the courts to settle this."

Eventually, I suspect the city is going to have to foot the bill to pay this guy's costs, on the assumption I make that he properly got the zoning bylaw three years ago. I know no more than this. I thought I would put it on the record because this is a matter that obviously has been dragged on for years. The public perhaps was led to believe this could be stopped. Mr Marchi was under the impression that he could build under the zoning bylaws, and now he's in court. They're all in court: the public, politicians, Mr Marchi. At the end of the day someone is going to pay, and it's very likely going to be the public that will end up paying for this particular problem.

On this bill, again, I bring no expertise to it. My only concern is this: The reason for having a licensed establishment is to make sure you properly embalm bodies, probably for public health purposes. That's why you license them. I suspect there could be other reasons. So if you have a licensed establishment embalm and then send the body to another place for visitation, what's wrong with that? Does that other operation have to be licensed? It doesn't seem to me that they have to be licensed in that way for visitation purposes.

My only concern, and the only reason I want to support this bill, is that the little funeral home establishment person who embalms and does the visitations in his centre is not able to compete against someone who has an established, licensed place and is able, because he has the means, to send the body elsewhere for visitation and get more business for himself.

I forget the term Mr Tascona used. Frances, what is that term?

Mr Tascona: Sounds like a disclaimer.

Mr Marchese: No, it's a term used for people making money on the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Through the Speaker, please.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): Death care industry?

Mr Marchese: Death care industry, yes. What a frightening thought. Imagine making money out of the dead, but it is an industry. That's why he calls it the death care industry. Is that a term that people use in the industry? I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't use that term, because it's not something you want to promote publicly, right, that you're making money out of the dead? Of course, they are.

So only at the level of protecting the little guy against the bigger guy who's got the bucks would be my motivation to support this bill, and for no other reason. There have been other explanations or opinions offered by the member from Durham who, it seemed to me, had other good issues to bring forth. Again, I assume they're going to bring forth a bill to deal with crematoriums and funeral homes, because there is a whole vast array of issues that flow from that.

I would be quite interested in supporting the bill, sending it to committee for discussion. Perhaps it will encourage the government to bring forth a bill, sooner rather than later, because it may be a matter of public interest, obviously. But that's what I would do, Mr Sergio. I would support you to bring this bill forward for discussion in committee, and if the government has other concerns, they will bring them there. It will give us an opportunity to have funeral directors come to committee to discuss their issues and their concerns, and perhaps we can hear more about the death care industry. I would like to learn a little more about that and other related issues.

1640

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): I'm pleased with the opportunity today to speak to private member's Bill 54. As we have heard, the challenges that face funeral and cemetery sectors here in Ontario are varied and complex. As my colleague the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations has said, and I agree, this means that our approach to any reform of the Funeral Directors and Establishments Act, and for that matter all of Ontario's death care legislation, must be comprehensive. It must include a thorough review of both consumer and business interests.

In my view, this is a very delicate topic. It seems like an unusual topic to be discussing in the Legislature, but it's an important topic. It's important that we ensure that the public can purchase cemetery and funeral services with confidence. In the decisions that are made in trying times of people's lives, it's very important that whatever law is in place is accurate and comprehensive.

I'd like to speak more specifically about the implications of Bill 54, introduced by the member for York West. This bill proposes that for-profit organizations must abide by the rules he wishes to establish. However, not-for-profit organizations would be exempt. Without a comprehensive review, we would be concerned about ensuring all providers of bereavement services would have equal access to the market.

The Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations has requested, as has been said, that the Red Tape Commission review a number of issues surrounding the cemetery and funeral sector with a view to ensuring that Ontario's death care legislation remains both current and consistent with the needs and wants of consumers. Whether or not exactly the same rules should apply to for-profit as to non-profit funeral service providers is still to be determined, but I do know that when the Red Tape

Commission completes its review of all the issues, they will all have been carefully considered.

Because Bill 54 doesn't provide equal access to the marketplace, this legislation would result in an uneven playing field in the bereavement industry, which clearly works to the detriment of both consumers and businesses. Also, I think a broader public consultation would be vital for the development of effective legislation before any regulatory changes are undertaken.

Another concern is that if Bill 54 were adopted, some areas of the province, at the discretion of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, would be exempt from its provisions. This would be planned for areas with small populations, and hence fewer services available. The result would be a mishmash of regionalized rules with no consistency, and that, in my view, is not in the best interests of the consumers for whom we are concerned.

I am not saying that change is not or will not be needed. I have spoken to some of my constituents on this matter in Guelph-Wellington and they have expressed a need for concern and change. But without careful and full consideration, we could end up providing ineffective regulation that would be a disservice to all.

I look forward to the opportunity to ensure that legislation continues to be supportive of the future needs of consumers. I would like to compliment the member across the way for his proposal for a solution to the situation that clearly does require some redress. Unfortunately, private member's Bill 54 is not the mechanism that I view as the appropriate way in which this can be delivered. Regrettably, I too will be unable to support this legislation as it has been presented to the House today.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I would like to commend the member for York West for his initiative with this piece of legislation. I'd also like to thank Jim Cardinal of Cardinal Funeral Homes for the input he has provided to me regarding this issue.

As a society, we have always treated the issue of death with respect and dignity. For over 150 years in this province, funeral homes have played a vital role in dealing with the issue of death and making sure that those services are provided for families. We've come a long way from the days of the furniture store and the funeral director running out of the same shop. We've evolved into a very sophisticated industry, an industry that's of extreme importance to citizens of Ontario. In fact, there are over 500 funeral establishments all across Ontario that are making sure that proper care is given to families at this most important time.

We know too that funeral homes and the public are protected by legislation and by the Board of Funeral Services. This is what it's all about: protection for the consumers. The industry has seen a great deal of change over the years. We've seen the rise of casket stores, Internet services, and cemeteries providing more and more services.

Visitation centres too have been part of the industry. We know that visitation centres have played an important role. In the Acting Speaker's own northern Ontario,

visitation centre have been an important part of the funeral industry. But the key to that is that those visitation centres have been owned and operated by licensed funeral directors. That's the concern with what is in front of us and what is taking place in the province today.

It needs to be understood by the members that funeral homes are licensed. We know they have a proper facility. We know funeral homes meet all health and safety regulations. Funeral homes undergo regular inspections. We know too that when a family comes into a funeral home, they are going to be dealing with a staff person who has not only been educated and trained in dealing with families at a time of grief within the family, but has the proper care and training in dealing with a body. We know too that when you go into a funeral home today, you have price lists available to you so you know every service you're getting and what the costs of those services are.

The concern over the visitation centres and the funeral centres is that these centres aren't licensed. We know there is no guarantee that there is regular inspection of these centres taking place. There is no guarantee that when a family comes in, they're going to be dealing with an individual who has received the proper education and the proper training.

There is a health issue involved in this too. Within a funeral home we know there is always the possibility that something can go wrong with an embalmed body. There are natural biological processes that can take place. At least in a funeral home, we have a guarantee that if something were to happen, we have those facilities right there to look after that body. But there is no guarantee that that is taking place in a visitation centre. It could be a very traumatic experience for a family member or for somebody who is at a funeral home for a visitation to not know and not have those safety provisions in the background.

Why this amendment? There is a public perception out there that these visitation funeral centres are licensed, and they are not. The public has this perception that they're dealing with educated and trained individuals and individuals who have full knowledge and understanding of the grieving process and the death process. That is not happening.

This is all about consumer protection. It's about protection to ensure that the consumer is well served. It is a concern about improper marketing techniques that can be and possibly are being used by some of these visitation centres. This is a very important time for people, and this could be intrusive into their lives. There is concern about commission selling. I think those are issues that we need to worry about.

Quite frankly, these visitation centres are not playing by the same rules as funeral homes, and we can't allow that to happen. Every one of us in this Legislature owes that to the public, to ensure they are getting licensed and trained people and the best service. We must deal with this amendment. People are most vulnerable at a time of death, and we cannot allow any unscrupulous, unedu-

cated or untrained individual to take advantage of those vulnerabilities that may exist.

We need the support of all this House to ensure that we close those loopholes that exist and make sure the citizens of Ontario are getting the best care and the best-educated and best-trained individuals at a time of death.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

The member for York West has two minutes to reply.

Mr Sergio: I want to thank my colleagues, all the members of the House, for speaking on my private member's bill.

Let me quickly address a couple of extra points here. I especially appreciate the comments of the members for Durham and Guelph-Wellington, where they recognized the serious problems that exist, and especially the member for Guelph-Wellington, who said that public consultation is vital for the process. The member for Durham says that we have to put pressure on the government. Well, this is the way to put pressure on the government, to move to the next step and make it public, give the public in general an opportunity to come forward with anything they know they want with respect to the Funeral Directors and Establishments Act, and there is a lot out there.

I take those concerns, but let's move on, let's bring it into the open, let's have public hearings, and let's make the act a better one for the general public, the practitioners, the directors and the consumers.

Ontario and Prince Edward Island are the only two provinces in Canada that do not allow a licensed funeral home on a cemetery property; 40 of 50 US states allow that as well.

I think the time is right to move ahead with making changes to the Funeral Directors and Establishments Act. While I take the concerns of your members with an open mind, I would like to see, indeed, that we move along and we put pressure on the government. I have to say, members, that since last spring the Red Tape Commission has not met once. It's time that we move on and give the general public, the practitioners and the consumers the needed protection that they deserve. I hope to have all your support.

1050

DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should (i) amend the Local Government Disclosure of Interest Act, 1994, by repealing clause (c) of subsection (1) of section 4 and substituting in its place, the following: (c) shall not use his or her office to seek to influence a decision made by another person to further the member's private interest; and (ii) proclaim the Local Government Disclosure of Interest Act, 1994, in force.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Clark has moved ballot item number 18. The member has up to 10 minutes to make his presentation.

Mr Clark: This is going to be an interesting situation in that we're dealing with an act that was part of an omnibus bill back in 1994. What's interesting is that it has passed third reading, but it hasn't been proclaimed into law. It has not been repealed, but it has been amended. It was amended when we were dealing with the same-sex benefits.

This particular bill, the Local Government Disclosure of Interest Act, is something that wouldn't come as a surprise to any members in the House that I would be very keenly interested in it in that I have continually over the years advocated that there needs to be more accountability in municipal government. I have continually advocated over the years, for example, that there's a need for value-for-dollar audits at the municipal level to hold municipal councils accountable for their tax spending, how they're spending the money, where they're spending the money.

I have argued over the years that there needs to be some type of enforcement for in camera meetings; that when a municipal council decides to go in camera—and we know the specific reasons as to when they're allowed to go in camera—if they somehow take a liberal interpretation of that, there should be a penalty upon the members who decide to go in camera illegally or take that liberal interpretation. It should come as no surprise that I have also argued over the years that municipal councillors should declare gifts that they may receive. In the course of doing their jobs, from time to time they receive gifts. They should be disclosed as well as the disclosure of income.

The Local Government Disclosure of Interest Act preamble states pretty clearly, "The purpose of this act is to preserve the integrity and accountability of local government decision-making." It does it through a number of areas.

It clearly defines what the pecuniary interest is for a member of a council. It states very clearly when they have a pecuniary interest. That means, in terms of income that they're receiving, if there's some financial benefit that they have. It states which members of their families might have that pecuniary interest; in this case, the spouse and any child who is under 18 years of age. You very clearly see that they've set out when the pecuniary interests would be there. That's a part of the act.

It also sets out the exceptions, because there can be exceptions. Someone may be receiving an honorarium from some charitable organization. That should be an exception to the rule. But I think it's important that, considering the fact that we have now moved into these mega-cities, these amalgamations that we now have—not that I supported it—at the same time, the salaries have increased for councillors. Councillors in some cities are making significant salaries. Although they may still argue that they're part-time, they are making significant salaries.

We have seen anecdotal evidence where a member of a council may be working for another body, in fact could be a lobbyist or a lobby group and lobbying municipal

councils, as well as sitting on a municipal council. So there's clear concern from a number of my constituents that there is an opportunity right now where individuals may find themselves in conflict.

Our job as legislators is to make sure that there are such standards. I point back to John Carver, who set up the Carver model of governance. You want to set clear standards so that the individuals know how far to the left to go, how far to the right to go. They know exactly what their standards are and what their limitations and expectations are. That's vitally important.

I don't know what's going to happen today in terms of this resolution. I could be the only guy standing here at the end of the day voting in favour of it. I know that. But, you know, I think it's vitally important that members in this House speak to the issue of accountability in municipal politics, speak to the issue of all of the things that they're concerned about, whether it's a declaration of gifts, a declaration of income, in camera meetings, value-for-dollar audits. It's vitally important, if the government decides they're not going to proclaim this thing, that they do something else. They have to do something. They have to set a level playing field. I hear from constituents in my community time and time again that it's vitally important.

I know there's a difference between urban municipalities and suburban municipalities and I hear from my colleagues that in a suburban municipality they may not have the same situation. I had one fellow state to me: "In the rural communities we don't need full disclosure because everybody knows everyone in the rural community. They already know everything that's going on in the rural community." If that's the case, then why would they be upset about full disclosure? If everyone already knows everything and knows how much money the members are making in that community, then why would they be upset about full disclosure?

I would encourage the members in this House to support the resolution. We know it's not binding but we have to send a message it's time to put some accountability in municipal politics. That's why I would encourage all of the members to help us out in that regard.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise today to speak to this bill from my colleague from Stoney Creek. It's one of those few occasions we're probably going to agree during the time we've had here so far.

It's important for us to look at the issue of accountability because the role of municipal government has changed dramatically over the years and the responsibilities of municipal government have changed dramatically. I do believe there is room for improvement in how we now deal with the issues of conflict and disclosure, in many ways. From my experience on municipal council, councils have a tremendous amount of power to make decisions that influence a lot of people, particularly from a financial point of view. Some decisions that council members make in regard to zoning changes, land use or planning are significant decisions that can go a long way in not only shaping the future of a community, but there's

the potential for conflict, the potential for abuse. I think you have to put a transparent system in place for that to happen.

This bill, I believe, is a step in that direction and certainly I will support it.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): The history of this issue is pretty interesting when you think that the bill that the member's resolution suggests should be amended was actually passed in 1994. It was part of Bill 163. That bill was a broad bill. It included a number of things, including major amendments to the Planning Act, which were looking at tightening up the way in which planning decisions were made, bringing major environmental considerations to the table there. We've seen most of that wiped out by the current government.

But the other provisions in there had to do with municipal conflict of interest. At that time there had been many examples in various municipalities in the province and, in fact, some people who had ended up in situations in court with charges about abuse of their office. But there weren't clear guidelines and it was in many ways unfair to municipal politicians or people seeking municipal office not to know what the rules would be and it was unfair to the public not to have very clear and concise and public rules of accountability.

As we see, time has passed and this very important section of Bill 163 has never been proclaimed. It was passed in November 1994. As you know, in June of the following year there was an election. Governments changed and we've had another election since then and this piece of the legislation remains in limbo, remains unproclaimed.

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In some ways I'm not surprised, because at that time the Conservative Party in opposition and, I may add, the Liberal Party in opposition opposed this bill, for a lot of reasons. But there were people who spoke very directly to the concerns they had over the conflict-of-interest rules. In fact, if I may, I might cite one such member, a member of the now government, Bill Murdoch, who on June 20, 1994, said:

"We have a lot of concerns about this bill in rural Ontario. This fall, we're going to have municipal elections. We want good people to run for our municipalities. We need good people out there. Municipal government is the closest government to the people, there's no doubt, far closer than anyone here is and we certainly need those people to run. But under Bill 163 I'm afraid we're going to have a hard time getting the good people to run. In some municipalities they hardly make any money at all and they're going to make them disclose what they make in their business at home or what their wives make in their business or what their kids make."

Mr Murdoch, clearly speaking on behalf of a certain constituency out there, suggesting that good people won't run if they have to be fiscally accountable in terms of disclosing finances and any conflict of interest, if they have to be accountable in terms of the rules of declaring their conflict when an item comes before them and

accountable in terms of their actions and their behaviour with respect to trying to influence a decision, the subject of which they may have a conflict of interest.

The clause that the member's resolution seeks to amend is under subsection 4(1), a broad section that says, "If a member has a pecuniary interest," a financial interest, "in any matter and is or will be present at a meeting at any time at which the matter is subject of consideration, the member," and it goes on to set out things that they have to do in terms of disclosure, in terms of absents themselves from the discussion. But clause (c), which this resolution seeks to amend reads, "shall not, at any time, attempt, either on his or her own behalf or while acting for, by or through another person, to influence the voting on any such matter or influence employees or persons interested in a contract with the council or board in respect of the matter."

The amendment that's proposed in the resolution, while I will be supporting the member's resolution, actually waters this down. It says, "(c) shall not use his or her office to seek to influence a decision made by another person to further the member's private interest."

The key words in that to me are that they "shall not use his or her office," as opposed to, under the current clause (c), "shall not, at any time, attempt, either on his or her own behalf," or for another person.

So the clause that's there is actually tougher in that it affects your entire behaviour. The proposed resolution suggests that you can't use your office. In other words, you can't pay for mailings out of your office or have your staff involved or conduct such activities of influence from your office. It may not be the member's intent, but I see it as watering down.

However, having said that, the fact that this section remains in limbo and has never been proclaimed is of great concern to me. As the member indicated in his introductory remarks to this resolution, we need this protection for the public now more than ever. As we have seen, not just the massive amalgamations of municipalities which have taken place are continuing to occur, we've also seen a tremendous downloading from the provincial government on to municipal governments and the scope and extent of business that they carry out has dramatically increased. So the member is right when he says that the world of municipal politics and the world of municipal governance has changed, and now more than ever we need clear conflict-of-interest rules.

I'm appalled that the government which stands so often and claims to be a government that cares about conflict of interest, that's brought in a lobbyist registry, that's done all of this sort of stuff, would allow this section to remain unproclaimed.

At the municipal government level we, as the public, as taxpayers, deserve no less protection from conflict of interest and backroom dealings than we do at a provincial or federal level. The issues are as important, they are as grand in terms of their scope and in terms of their impact and they are as large in terms of their financial where-

withal out there in the community to have an impact on people's businesses and on transactions.

I think the resolution is worthy of support because, in particular, it calls on the government to proclaim this section of the legislation. I believe the previous Rae government, which brought forward this legislation, was definitely on the right track in bringing public accountability at the municipal level with disclosure and conflict-of-interest rules. I think it is a shame the current Harris government—even though I realize they oppose the legislation—has not proclaimed this section and I think it is—I can't use the word because I know you'll rule me out of order. But it's interesting that on the one hand they speak to the public as defenders of accountability and of protectors against conflict of interest, and yet on the other hand they leave unproclaimed such an important section of legislation that would affect those issues directly at the municipal level.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to join in the debate commenced by Mr Clark, the member for Stoney Creek. I can say that he, as a new member, has certainly done a very capable job. For a former municipal councillor as myself, this is interesting because when I was on council in 1994 and now as a member elected in 1995, the requirements of a municipal councillor versus the requirements with respect to an MPP are almost like night and day with respect to disclosure and the requirements put on a provincial member.

I can understand the intent of the legislation that was put forth in 1994, and I was aware of it, having been on council, in terms of the requirements that are put forth in this piece of legislation.

The purpose of the piece of legislation is interesting. It says: "The purpose of this act is to preserve the integrity and accountability of local government decision-making." That's the thrust of the bill.

It deals with the pecuniary interest of a particular member. The definition of "pecuniary interest" is "includes a direct or indirect pecuniary interest of a member and a pecuniary interest deemed to be that of a member."

The pecuniary interest involves that of the member who is "a shareholder in, or director or senior officer of, a corporation" privately held, or where that person "has a controlling interest in, or is a director or senior officer of, a corporation" that is publicly held, or "is a partner or agent of a person." So it's designed to deal with direct and indirect dealings with respect to a member where that member can gain financially, if you want to put it in the simplest terms, where there's a pecuniary interest.

Obviously, the public wants to know, when someone votes on a resolution or on a bylaw because we're dealing with the municipal level here, that that person is making that decision with a clear conscience and not with the opportunity to gain financially.

But it also deals with more than just the disclosure of an interest, which you have to declare in council and you can't vote or debate on that particular matter. It also deals with gifts. The section that deals with that is kind of interesting. It says, "A member shall not, either directly

or through another person, accept a fee, gift or personal benefit except compensation authorized by law that is connected with the performance of his or her duties of office." The exception is "a gift or personal benefit that is received as an incident of the protocol or social obligations that normally accompany the responsibilities of office," or a contribution that is permitted under the Municipal Elections Act.

This is something that obviously applies to the members here, with respect to gifts, but there's a further requirement which is something that, in terms of what we're dealing with, I think is very important in terms of bringing transparency and making a member really think about what their financial interests are and what their positioning is.

1110

What we're talking about is the financial disclosure requirement. Obviously, every member here knows, in terms of the obligations we have, that we have to disclose our complete financial interests. We're also reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner, with respect to the statements that are filed, and they're filed annually. That's what was put into this piece of legislation, the financial disclosure requirement, which applies to members of a council and a board, as defined in subsection 1(1) of the Education Act, a public utilities commission and a police village. What it requires is that every member shall, within 60 days of being elected or appointed, file with the clerk of the municipality or the secretary of the board a financial disclosure statement in the prescribed form. That's an obligation so that obviously a council member sitting down, looking at the situation, would be fully aware of what their financial situation is, and it's filed. Obviously, that's something that we do here. So there's a difference in terms of what's required here at this level versus another level. When you deal with it in terms of the public trust and you deal with what the public expects from the decision-makers, people they put into that office, you really have to look at it. Should there be a difference?

I think the member from Stoney Creek has indicated that he understands there's a growing concern in communities like his about holding our public officials accountable to the people who elected them.

As our municipalities increase in size, municipal governments and salaries grow with them. Certainly that's a case in terms of how councils deal with their increase in compensation. For example, in the city of Barrie, during the term the councillors decided, with some debate but not a public forum on it, to raise their remuneration significantly.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): How much?

Mr Tascona: That's for the public record, member from St Catharines.

I'll give you the example of the town of Innisfil, where the members have decided by resolution: "Yes, we're going to increase our remuneration, but we're going to do it at election time. We want everybody to know that that's on the table. This is what we're looking

to be increased to, and that will be part of the election process."

So there are different ways of doing that but certainly everybody here has heard of situations where the public has not been happy with the way compensation has been handled by municipalities or school boards.

The member also says, "To avoid conflicts of interest and to keep provincial and federal politicians honest, rules of disclosure are in place." That's right, they're also in place at the federal and provincial levels. We are required to keep our own books open to the public. What has happened is that a set of rules for municipal politicians has been established, but they're not in effect.

What the member is saying here is: "You put together a piece of legislation that's been passed by the House, but you haven't put it in effect." What he's requesting this House to do is put it into effect.

As a member who wasn't here in 1994, but as I'm discussing my past as a former municipal councillor and as a current MPP of the House, I feel that what the member is proposing is legitimate. I think he's certainly dealing with a piece of legislation that would deal with the situation. It may be that things have changed somewhat, but that's something for us to review in our own time. I feel that the principles of the legislation are sound because they apply to us here, so I can support it in that vein. What the member from Stoney Creek is looking for is to proclaim it in force.

We've heard from other members here, and we've also heard from the member from Stoney Creek. I've said my piece. I think that the intention is in the right direction and I can support that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Bradley: Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this debate. I intend to support the resolution, which I think makes me ask the question, why hasn't this been proclaimed for the last six years? If it's been there, one would have thought that someone in the government would have proclaimed this section, because it is an important section. It has been mentioned already that federal and provincial members are under very restrictive—and justifiably restrictive—rules in terms of conflict of interest, in terms of declaring interest, and it seems to me that this piece of legislation should be enacted.

As the member for Beaches-East York noted, there may be a weakening of one section. I hope that's not the case and I hope when this is brought forward again, if there is a proclamation or a change, that perhaps we can look at that.

This reminds me of the spills bill. There was a bill passed in 1979 in this Legislature in a minority Parliament. It dealt with putting the onus on polluters. In other words, if you spilled an item into the ground or into the air, it forced the person responsible for the spill to act immediately and assume responsibility immediately and then other things would be decided later. It was in fact reverse onus.

The Conservative government of the day refused to implement it by proclaiming it, so I understand what the member's worry is. For approximately five years we had no spills bill in this province. The polluters were having a heyday. One of the first things the new Peterson government did was proclaim that spills bill. I think it's important that we do proclaim legislation that's on the books.

It is important to have that disclosure of interest. If you look at it—and I say this advisedly—it's easier to buy a municipal politician than it is a federal or a provincial politician—"buy" meaning influence. If you think of it, it's pretty hard to buy the whole political party when you're making a donation to a political party because you have to buy the influence of the whole caucus. I think it's very difficult.

The member from the Niagara Escarpment will agree with me, I am sure, that an individual politician at the municipal level is much more subject to influence than someone at the provincial level. That's why I always thought the province should have some very strong powers in terms of planning. The NDP government put that into effect. I personally supported that legislation. I didn't think it went far enough, quite frankly.

Ms Lankin: Your caucus didn't.

Mr Bradley: There was a hostage in the bill somewhere that made the Liberal caucus not vote for it, I'm sure, but I personally strongly supported that legislation.

You have to watch out. When I see somebody on a municipal council voting a certain way for a developer, I always ask the question—and the news media local should be going to see—did the developer donate to that person? Does that mean the person can't vote that way? No, but it's an interesting piece of information. I think all these rules that apply to those of us who are here should apply to municipal councillors as well.

I want to say as well that we need more control and disclosure of fundraising and spending at all levels of government, including the municipal level. As far as the provincial government is concerned, I would have liked to see this resolution deal with the provincial government, because in the last session of this Legislature before the election, this government changed the rules to rig them in favour of a governing party. They did that by increasing the spending limits that political parties can spend during election campaigns—and frankly, previous to the election campaigns—and the amount of money that people, corporations, unions and anybody else who wants to contribute can contribute to the coffers of any particular political party. In my view, that is a backward step in democracy. It gets us down to some of the problems they're having in the US. The bigger the role that money plays in politics, the worse it is for the democratic system.

The last provincial legislation also exempted certain things, such as polling, from any spending limits at all. I worry again that the party that caters to the richest people in the province—the most powerful people in the province, the wealthiest people in the province, who are able to give the largest donations—is going to benefit

from that kind of legislation. I think that's detrimental to democracy, and that usually favours a party in power.

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We should also look at who gets appointed to agencies, boards and commissions. The member would know this is important as well. Are these municipal councillors having people who contributed to them appointed to agencies, boards and commissions? That's interesting to note. It doesn't mean they should be excluded. I don't want to say that, because I think it's unfair to say that, but it's interesting to note. The more disclosure, the member recognizes through his resolution, the better off we are.

We want to know who benefits from privatization, for instance, when various levels move toward privatization. Who benefits the most from that? Is it the friends of councillors, the friends of the provincial government, the friends of the federal government? Who benefits from that?

The member would note that there has been an assault on local government. He would agree with me on this, I know. *Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government*, by Dr Andrew Sancton of the University of Western Ontario, is a book worth reading before anybody embarks upon amalgamation. The member would know that when you have these larger units, people have to spend more money and have more influential friends to get them elected. So all these people who think that when you've got the smaller units there are too many politicians out there and think one big region is the answer to everything, as some people in Niagara do, should recognize that they will end up with 16 regional councillors who have to have lots of money or a prominent name to run, or end up with having political parties at the municipal level, which I would be opposed to. This is timely in that regard. I recommend *Merger Mania* to as many people as possible.

What has this government done in terms of its own contribution to democracy or detriment to democracy? It has changed the procedural rules of this Legislature to make the role and responsibility of members diminished considerably and given much more power to unelected people. It has changed the election rules so that we have a shorter campaign, which again benefits the party with the most money, usually the incumbent party. There is no enumeration to speak of any more. We're rigging the rules for municipal referendums now so that the Minister of Municipal Affairs will declare what kind of questions should go on the ballot, not the locally elected people. We have no controls on government advertising, so the government can advertise whatever it wants and spend taxpayers' dollars. The Ombudsman's role is reduced. The Environmental Commissioner is no longer independent. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act is not effective because it costs a lot of money to get the information. Last, there's the downloading on to municipalities.

I'm glad the member brought this resolution forward. I hope he considers others of the items that I have

suggested during my remarks for further consideration for resolutions.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I just want to say for the record that I agree with the member for Stoney Creek. I support the resolution and I want to congratulate him for bringing this resolution forward, because I suspect he may be one of the few brave members today supporting this resolution. If that's the case, I congratulate him even more.

Just as an aside, I support everything my Liberal colleague said. Everything. There was one little thing, just for the record. I suspect it's not just the Tories who get the rich guys to go to their fundraising events. M. McGuinty, your leader, had a \$600 fundraiser. I'd love to check in. It would be nice to be able to go to the Tory fundraiser and the McGuinty fundraiser and see whether there's some cross-pollination between these groups.

I've got to tell you, I represent the bankers in my riding in downtown Toronto, insurance companies. They don't come to my \$25 fundraisers.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: No, 25 bucks. That's all the people in my riding can afford. We had good food. We had a good band too, a montuno band, a very jazzy, classy band, all for 25 bucks.

Mr Bradley: Was Mr Cleghorn not there?

Mr Marchese: No, Mr Cleghorn said he couldn't come to my fundraiser, but I suspect he was at yours, and theirs: cross-pollination, inbreeding, scary stuff. It was just an aside, Jim, as a friend.

But speaking to the resolution, which is far more important, the reason I suspect the member for Stoney Creek watered down the section is because he's trying to get a buy-in from the members, who are saying, "Look, if you can't water down this bill, I don't know that we can support it." It's a suspicion of mine. I could be wrong. But I don't support the change that you have made because I think it too provides a loophole through which a number of people could slip, where some official who might have been exerting some influence directly or through others could simply claim that he or she was not acting in an official capacity. It's a loophole. I understand the political reasons why you're watering it down. If we go to committee we can talk about it, because I want to support this. Hopefully it will go to committee in order for us to be able to have discussion on this bill.

I support your language about the need for standards, the need for clear guidelines, when you speak to this bill. People have a right to have expectations of their municipal councillors. You may have used the word "accountability"; I don't remember. But it's certainly a word that you often use as a government: "We want to make everyone accountable. We, provincial politicians, want to be accountable, and above all, we want transparency." That's another word your government often uses, doesn't it, Brad? "Transparency." Does this not give the public greater transparency that at the moment it does not have?

You can't say: "We want accountability. We want to be held accountable. We have a disclosure act. But we don't think municipal politicians should." It isn't consistent. It is in fact contradictory to have one position for one level and not the same for the other level. As Mr Bradley, the member for St Catharines, said, if we need accountability in these matters, it's at the municipal level more than any other level, I suspect, generally speaking—not for all cases, and some ministries in particular. But at the municipal level we're dealing with zoning issues, planning issues. We're dealing with development issues. In some municipalities, more than others, some people can be greased to be helpful with the decision-making. They can. I believe they can. I believe municipal politicians are human, and they might decide that for the public interest they want to support something, I suspect.

I know my good friend from Dufferin-Peel says some of these municipal politicians only make 5,000 bucks; why do we have to have disclosure for someone who only really makes \$5,000 as a city councillor? But if you are helpful for some development industry in the area, it can amount to something, right? You understand the expression, right?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Yes. It's a universal expression, right? This expression; sorry, Frances. She couldn't see the expression.

At the municipal level there's a need, in my view, to have integrity of our local officials so that their integrity is not brought into question, so that the taxpayers—remember them?—have greater reliability through the accountability mechanism that you're hopefully about to bring forward, and because there's greater transparency they will feel better. Whether or not it solves the problem of possible improprieties is another matter, but at least it gives me, Joe Taxpayer, a greater feeling of protection, that my public interest is protected. That's the extent of this bill. That's why, in my view, we need to have this bill brought forward: for the public interest and to make municipal politicians' behaviour accountable.

If this goes to committee, it will give municipal politicians an opportunity to discuss, to give evidence one way or the other, to give opinion one way or the other. It will give municipal officials who may have something to say about this an opportunity to come forward at committee and say what they want to say.

If the Conservative members today don't support this, it will be inconsistent with their usual politicking. It will contradict their usual language of transparency and accountability. If that is so, they will be indeed consistent with their contradictory behaviour, and maybe life goes on. I don't know.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: That's the beauty of the Tories. You can be inconsistent all the time and it doesn't matter.

I'm going to support your resolution, Mr Clark. I hope the others do too.

1130

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is a pleasure to rise and speak to the private member's bill from Mr Clark, the member for Stoney Creek. It's a resolution, actually. The resolution is a bit technical because it deals with an existing statute that's on the books and has never been declared as law.

I served for a number of years as a school trustee and as a local and regional councillor. I can tell you that today, in that particular respect, there are election disclosure documents. Every contribution is a matter of public record, as it should be. I fully support that. There should be more transparency and accountability to the public, the people you're elected to serve. That already exists under the Elections Act, so that any publicly elected person must declare the contributions—provincially, federally, municipally, school board—whoever is elected to public office. Despite the comments from the member for St Catharines, I think it really is a red herring to say that there isn't enough disclosure in that respect. All of us are required to do that.

Secondly, there is an already existing requirement on the books, under the Municipal Act, for the conflict of interest, which means that your participation in public debate is limited in those areas where you have a pecuniary interest, as it should be. I think that is important, and it does exist. I don't see how this really embellishes that or changes that in any way, nor should it.

The one part that we may have some discussion about is the personal financial disclosure portion, which is Mr Clark's intent here. I find it difficult to disagree with him, because we in public office are accountable. There are degrees, if you will—

Mr Marchese: Of public accountability.

Mr O'Toole: No—of interest. Meaning, when I served on council I think our pay at local council was under \$10,000 annually. I did have a job with General Motors, the major employer in the area, and I made considerably more than I did as a councillor, being there 30 years in a management position. I would also have had stock options and participated in the stock plan. Being over 50 years of age, I had investments and such things that I did not think were appropriately disclosed and would not be appropriately disclosed for a job that's paying less than \$10,000 a year. I did it out of interest for my community, and I think in small-town Ontario, that is generally the motive; people aren't there to line their pockets. Nor do I think anyone in public office, in a general sense, is there for that reason at all, nor would I like to leave that impression. But that is the part where I don't believe, at that level of government, there is a requirement for full personal financial disclosure.

I might add, it would be quite onerous for some people serving on municipal utilities or the public board. It says here a fireman who was holding public office, or something like that, would also have to disclose.

That being said, Mr Clark raises a very good point. I want to make sure that I have the record straight here. The member for Beaches-East York did say that the Rae

government brought forward this section—which I recognize is true, she did—and it's sitting on the books now. But she also said in her remarks this morning that we have strengthened such things as disclosure of information, conflict of interest and the Integrity Commissioner. We have strengthened those areas. Each of us goes through an annual review, as we should.

The member for St Catharines went on a bit of a rant, talking about a number of issues. At the end of the day, the public decides. We've seen an election just recently in Prince Edward Island where there was a back-to-back majority. Ideologically there may be differences between those who don't believe in tax cuts, which I think is what I heard Mr Bradley say, and those who do believe you can stimulate the economy through an economic plan that includes a broad selection of tax cuts, so that people can stimulate the economy instead of bureaucrats stimulating the economy.

That's where we differ and the rest of it is pretty much rhetoric. I will be supporting the intention of the bill, but I'm not sure I can support Mr Clark's resolution this morning. Others may want to comment and I'll leave a couple of minutes for that.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I've learned a lot this morning, hearing the discussion about urban politics. My riding is primarily a rural area. We have some cities such as Belleville and Picton, but by and large it's a rural area. I know the vast majority, if not all of the politicians in my riding and they're not in it for money. They're simply not in it for money.

I believe that if we are going to have a democracy it requires two things to happen. One is that people vote, and I think there needs to be an improvement in that rate, although perhaps as politicians we've made people cynical and turned them off voting. We also need people willing to serve, and serving is by and large a thankless task at the municipal level.

A municipal politician in a small community literally opens their entire life up to the community when they put their name forward. I would suggest that if you ever want to know what your family tree is, run for local office. People will find it out for you and will share with you all of your background. Between politicians who make \$62,000 a year in Toronto versus politicians who make \$1,000 a year in rural Ontario, there's a profound difference and I think we need legislation that reflects that difference.

I read in the media a remark a couple of days ago that I think is pretty fair. It says that if you want to understand what a piece of legislation from the Mike Harris government means, read the title and then "un" or "dis," because it's the reverse of it. Interestingly, as we've gone for fewer politicians, by and large across Ontario we've seen a substantial increase in the compensation for elected officials at the municipal level. That may be warranted. They're doing a lot of additional work; they're serving a much larger clientele. So we have fewer politicians to represent the public, but at the same time they're receiving much more money.

I know that the politicians in my community aren't doing it for the money. I can think of trustees with \$5,000 per year that they pay taxes on and election expenses that they pay out of their own pocket. I have seen trustees come to a school board meeting when they've got hay in the field that really needed to be brought in because it was going to rain. They came because of their sense of responsibility.

I have served with trustees who lose pay at work when they come to serve at a board meeting. On top of the time, there is travel. With the extremely large school boards in my riding, trustees are travelling an hour and a half or an hour and three quarters each way to get to a meeting and return. Local politicians who are well known are always on duty, 24 hours a day. Whether they're at home, in the grocery store or simply out at some community function as a private citizen, they are on duty. There is no anonymity in a rural area as there is in the city.

I had concern back in 1994 with the legislation as it was drafted then, and my concern was that it took the big stick and tried to deal with every individual on every board. I am now in my 24th year serving on the children's aid society board. I know, for the other people on the board with me, that we receive zero dollars. However, it is an organization that fell under that legislation, so someone serving on that board would have to take and disclose their financial interest and that of their spousal partners and their children under 18 etc for a role that provides no opportunity for corruption and is quite the opposite: a role where people are trying to contribute.

I certainly believe in transparency in government. I couldn't be more supportive of it. I would like to know some of the decisions that are made in cabinet because I think the public needs to know. I would like to know all of the regulations, which I believe in many ways are very quietly slipped through. I think there's a lack of transparency there. I think more transparency maybe would have allowed this scandal at the ORC not to happen. As a provincial government, I think we need to tackle corruption. I think we need to make government more open, but it's not at the level we're talking about this morning. This is simply deflecting some of the issues.

I'm not convinced either that this will stop corruption. I believe the intent of the legislation is good and I believe there's room for improvement, but I think we need to do it in consultation with our partners, not have it legislated and forced on them. Let's sit down and talk to the people involved.

I would suggest AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, would be an excellent source of information. I know their involvement back in 1994 wasn't listened to, but there's still an opportunity, since it hasn't been proclaimed into law, to talk with the people at the municipal level. Let's draw on their expertise, let's hear their life experiences and let's hear their advice on what it should look like. This may essentially be it, but I believe there is room for refinement to reflect the diversity of the roles that are played by board members, municipal politicians and school board trustees in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Stoney Creek has two minutes plus the remaining time for his caucus.

Mr Clark: The word in all of this debate this morning that keeps popping up is "accountability." I think that in the real sense of the word that's exactly what the constituents in my community are concerned about. Whether it's municipal, provincial or federal politicians, they want accountability and they want transparency. This is what this particular bill from 1994 provides.

I've heard some of the comments. "We should have accountability when there's a larger salary, but if there is a smaller salary, then we shouldn't have that accountability." In essence, that's the argument you're making when you're talking about an urban to a rural community. "They're only making \$5,000 and we don't have to worry about it, but if they're making \$70,000"—where do we draw the line? The argument that has been made is that in rural communities it's not an issue because they are all honest people. I'm not saying they're not. I'm not saying that urban politicians are not honest. What I'm saying is that the laws of the land are set out so that everybody in the province has to adhere to the law of the land and have it apply to them. We should have one set of standards for everybody. In this case, I think it's important that we begin developing that set of standards on accountability.

Disclosure is important—the idea of disclosing gifts that are received. We hear anecdotal stories of trips to Florida being given out. We hear anecdotal stories of a week at the cottage. We don't know what dealings are going on. But if we have to disclose gifts here, as members in this House, then I think the onus is on municipal politicians to do the same. I think the vast majority of municipal politicians are in the job because they're dedicated and want to do what's right in the community. I can't conceive of why a municipal politician would argue that they shouldn't be held accountable, that there shouldn't be disclosure on these items.

I cannot accept for a moment that there should be a line in the sand that once you hit a certain salary level of, say, \$5,001, now you have full disclosure. If we're going to have one set of standards, it should be for all municipal politicians. I think that's vitally important.

In closing, I want to remind all the members that this was part of an omnibus bill that was brought in earlier on. This is one section. It hasn't been proclaimed. This is a resolution. I may be standing alone on this side of the House at the end of the day—I don't know—but I think everyone who spoke today spoke to the need for accountability and transparency. If the government is not going to proclaim this act into law, then they had better find other means to fix the Municipal Act to put accountability in place, to make sure the disclosure is there, and to deal with all the other issues I have continually raised in this House since first being elected.

I thank everyone for their participation this morning and I encourage them to vote in favour of the resolution.

The Acting Speaker: In accordance with standing order 96(e), I will suspend the House until 12 o'clock, when we will deal with both ballot item number 17 and ballot item number 18.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1200.

FUNERAL DIRECTORS
AND ESTABLISHMENTS
AMENDMENT ACT
(FUNERAL SERVICES), 2000
LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES DIRECTEURS
DE SERVICES FUNÉRAIRES
ET LES ÉTABLISSEMENTS FUNÉRAIRES
(SERVICES FUNÉRAIRES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item number 17.

Mr Sergio has moved second reading of Bill 54. Shall the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

We will call in the members after we deal with ballot item number 18.

DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Clark has moved ballot item number 18. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Call in the members for ballot item number 17. It will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

FUNERAL DIRECTORS
AND ESTABLISHMENTS
AMENDMENT ACT
(FUNERAL SERVICES), 2000
LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT
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DE SERVICES FUNÉRAIRES
ET LES ÉTABLISSEMENTS FUNÉRAIRES
(SERVICES FUNÉRAIRES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): All those in favour will please stand and remain standing until their name is called.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Boyer, Claudette	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Lankin, Frances	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Levac, David	Sergio, Mano
Cleary, John C.	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Martin, Tony	Tilson, David
Crozier, Bruce	Parsons, Emie	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until their name is called.

Nays

Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Clark, Brad
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Brenda

Guzzo, Garry J.
Hastings, John
Klees, Frank
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mushinski, Marilyn

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Spina, Joseph
Stewart, R. Gary
Tascona, Joseph N.
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wood, Bob

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 23; the nays are 22.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, the bill is referred to the committee of the whole House.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I would like the bill referred to the social development committee.

The Acting Speaker: Is the House in favour of this matter going to the social development committee?

Would members in favour please stand.

Those opposed, please stand.

A majority of the House being in agreement with the request of the member, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

All matters relating to private members' public business now having been completed, the House will adjourn until 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1210 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I regret that I have to rise today to express my extreme sorrow and shock upon hearing of the violence that has taken place at an Ottawa-area high school this morning.

Based upon what we know so far, a grade 10 student has stabbed four fellow students and one staff member at Cairine Wilson high school in Orleans, a suburb of Ottawa. I am relieved to report that none of the injuries appear to be life-threatening. I know I speak for all the members of this Legislature when I offer my heartfelt condolences to the victims, their families, the students and the staff of the school. We, each and every one of us, pray for their speedy recovery, and we offer our support in any way possible.

As many of you will know, today is the anniversary of the awful Columbine High School shootings in the United States. A few days from now will be the anniversary of the Taber, Alberta, tragedy.

Unfortunately, this violent act is not an isolated incident in schools. In the coming weeks, as the information behind the circumstances unfolds, we must closely examine the reasons behind these very regrettable acts. It

goes without saying that as politicians, parents, educators and young people, we all have a responsibility to take action and the necessary steps to develop the school supports that will address the underlying reasons for these acts of violence. Preventive measures such as counselling, dispute resolution and sensitivity to diversity could perhaps prevent future occurrences.

For now let me express again, on behalf of this House, my shock and sorrow at these events, and let us pray for those involved for a speedy recovery.

GUELPH ARTS COUNCIL

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): Today I would like to advise the House of the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Guelph Arts Council. Over its quarter century, this council has nurtured art activities in Guelph, making my community of Guelph-Wellington a more vibrant place in which to live.

Its mandate is to stimulate, encourage and coordinate the development of arts in Guelph. To accomplish this, the council has acted as a programmer, a resource and support service provider, an arts incubator and an advocate. Over its 25 years it has assisted in the development of over 20 cultural undertakings, most recently the Arts Schmoozefest. Without the council's patient and unwavering efforts, the River Run Centre would never have come to fruition.

It is an indispensable information resource concerning the arts in Guelph. Its bimonthly newsletter keeps the entire community plugged into the ongoing arts activities in Guelph and area. Its resource centre and its community guidance all assist in areas of interest to the community such as in things like grants of copyright.

It has contributed to the preservation of Guelph's historical properties. From its historical walking tours of the city to its public art displays, it makes a daily contribution to the social and economic well-being of our community.

I would ask all members to join with me in complimenting the board, the staff, the supporters and the volunteers and congratulating the Guelph Arts Council on its 25th anniversary and wishing it continued success in the years to come.

ANNIVERSARY OF ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I rise today in remembrance of the 85th anniversary of the Armenian genocide. On April 24, 1915, the Turkish government of the day began a systematic genocide of 1.5 million Armenians, many of whom were women and children.

This Monday the Armenian community will gather at Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Scarborough for a special service. On April 25 there will be a vigil here at Queen's Park. On April 30 the genocide committee will commemorate the anniversary at the Alex Manoogian Centre.

If the world community allows a genocide to happen without comment or consequence, we have learned it will be repeated. Hitler once said to many around him, in planning his Holocaust, "Who today remembers the Armenian genocide?" In other words, if the world community had stood behind the Armenian community, perhaps Hitler would never have been able to do his unspeakable deeds.

There is a continuing piece of unfinished business in this sad saga: that to this day, those responsible for the genocide have failed to acknowledge their responsibility or to apologize. For the Armenian community—indeed for all of us—the wound that is the Armenian genocide cannot begin to heal until those responsible, the Turkish government, accept responsibility and apologize.

CELEBRATION OF WOMEN AWARDS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Today I rise to talk about women who make a difference. Last weekend, I was asked to participate in an exciting event in my riding of York North. It was a celebration of women at the York region women's show that culminated in an awards dinner, the Celebration of Women awards. Women were nominated for their contributions in the fields of politics, business and in the not-for-profit public and private sectors. As well as acknowledging their personal accomplishments, women nominees were judged for their contributions locally, regionally, provincially and internationally.

Twenty-one women were nominated and the following received awards: Sabine Schleese, Kim DeWolde, Brenda Larsen, Susan Hay, Mayor Margaret Black, Mayor Lorna Jackson, Dorothy Clark-McClure, Sandra Hynds, Sue Dodgson, Maureen Pollock, Susan Plamondon, Lindsay Freeman, Alice Luckcock, Christina Doyle, Donna Whitmore, Mary Filpetto, Dr Helena Jaczek, Ildiko Luxemburger, Dr Jennifer Steadman, Pam Santon and Charlotte Garner.

The woman of the year is Ildiko Luxemburger, a registered nurse who works in the surgical unit of the York County Hospital.

Each of these represents the fact that we can make a difference and serves as an inspiration to all of us.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): How does a toll charge of \$1.13 become a grand total of \$64.76? Easy. Just leave it to the 407 ETR administration: actual toll charges of \$1.13; plus administration charges of \$30; plus an adjustment of \$30 for God knows what; plus a non-existing previous charge of \$27.20; a fee of \$2, as if a \$30 administration charge wasn't enough; and a \$1.19 charge for, again, non-existing late payments.

The 407 ETR administration is in a state of total disorientation, because they can't keep up with the tremendous increase in revenue. They are rubbing their hands while Ontario motorists are licking their wounds. Gee,

thanks, Premier. You are doing a swell job leaving Ontario motorists unprotected from huge toll increases. Soon tolls will be up again by some 30%. We have taxes and we have tolls, and now we have highway robbery. Now you can see how \$1.13 becomes a grand total of \$64.76.

This must be Mike Harris magic, giving a wand to the ETR administration to charge the people of Ontario whatever they want, whenever they want. This is a rip-off that the Premier should not allow to continue.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In March 1998, the Ministry of Transportation transferred \$4.6 million to the regional municipality of Sudbury to complete the widening of regional road 80 through to Hanmer in the city of Valley East. This fulfilled a commitment made by the MTO in 1975 to fully fund four-laning of this highway when traffic volumes warranted. At the time of the transfer, local officials raised concerns that drainage improvements were needed along this section of highway and without these it made no sense to continue. The MTO agreed to consider a funding request for this work too, so that both projects could occur together.

The city of Valley East submitted its proposal and technical work to MTO on May 6, 1999. On November 12, I wrote to Minister Turnbull to request a decision since one had still not been made. On December 15, the minister replied that his staff were reviewing this request and would be in touch with local officials "in the very near future."

On February 26, the MTO finally replied to ask for more technical information in order to make a decision. It took nine months for this government to finally get around to reviewing this important proposal, and still no decision has been made.

1340

Is this what the government means by doing more for less? The MTO has now suggested a meeting to discuss the technical concerns. This is a meeting which should have occurred months ago. I can only hope that all the issues will be addressed and dealt with at this time. Otherwise, that \$4.6 million will continue to sit, another construction season will be lost, and local people who could use work this summer will be out in the cold once again.

CENTENNIAL COLLEGE

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I'm very pleased to be able to stand in the Legislature today to report about a major reinvestment initiative that the Mike Harris government has made in post-secondary education in Scarborough.

Today, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade announced a \$2.5-million investment in Centennial College in my riding of Scarborough Centre. The investment is to establish a centre for aerospace training and

education. The centre will offer post-secondary, apprenticeship, corporate and secondary school co-operative programs in aerospace manufacturing and support.

I know the administration at Centennial is eager to get this project underway. Last month, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities announced an investment of nearly \$39 million in Centennial College through the Mike Harris government's SuperBuild Growth Fund. That investment is part of a \$70-million, public-private partnership to build new computer study facilities for Centennial College at the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus. That investment will allow the college to increase enrolment in computer science programs by over 4,400 students.

It's an exciting time for both Centennial College and young people in Scarborough. These investments are a tremendous example of the Mike Harris government's dedication to giving our students the tools and the education they need to be successful in the new economy.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Just two days ago, in the community of Penetanguishene, the Minister of Correctional Services came to town. He finally came to town after four long months of using taxpayers' money to do a push poll to see what people think, spending taxpayers' money to try and soften the opinion of people with local radio ads to the tune of \$16,000, spending taxpayers' money to mail each and every resident a letter to tell them, "You'll get what we say you'll get."

At the meeting, the minister took great pride in describing the new prison as a shiny new technological wonder of the world, the flagship of corrections in Ontario.

History teaches us about another group of arrogant and boastful people, the builders of the Titanic. This flagship was the most technologically advanced wonder of the world. No one could stop this flagship.

The people of Penetanguishene are sending up the flares. They see the iceberg ahead. It's privatization. They see the danger ahead and you're just admiring the glitz and the glamour. They, along with 75 other communities across the province, are telling you how they feel and what they want to have happen in their community.

Minister, steer clear of the iceberg because if you don't, you and your government are going to go down with the ship. Don't take anyone else with you.

YOUTH CITIZENSHIP AWARDS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Yesterday in the House we debated Bill 55, the Parental Responsibility Act, and at that time I wanted to make some positive comments about the youth in our community today. I also had the pleasure last evening of attending the designation of awards for citizenship for the Blue Heron division of the local Pathfinder groups.

With you indulgence, Mr Speaker, I will read the names of those young people who received the award for citizenship as part of their guiding principles. From the 3rd Bowmanville: Erin Ashton, Jennifer Dugan, Elizabeth Salisbury, Rebecca Townsend, Rachel Boldt, Anna Koppelman, Samantha Salisbury. From the 5th Bowmanville: Jennifer Ashby, Laura Frisina, Sarah Brunton and Jennifer Weston. From the 1st Courtice: Felicia Jefferson and Cherie Van Driel. From the 3rd Courtice: Heather Yeo, Samantha Bonchek and Charlotte McDonald. From the 1st Orono: Caitlin Cameron, Amanda Stewart, Jessica Knapp. From the 2nd Newcastle: Amanda Coady, Heather Dunlop, Kassia Falla, Nickie Golder, Caitlin Laing, Shannon Morrison, Gemma Sheppard, Jamie White, Caitlin Darcy, Sian Evans, Jenny Feltham, Jenna Hossack, Leigh McSwan, Erika Sanders, Erin Ward and Mandy Willson.

I commend each of these young people for putting a good face on children. When we were talking about it yesterday, it just depressed me that we looked at the negative; we should be looking at the positive things our young people do.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I'd like to bring to the attention of this Legislature an important environmental initiative announced this week that will have a significant effect on air quality.

The government has now finalized our regulation requiring mandatory reporting of annual emissions. It comes into effect for electric power generation companies and their facilities as of May 1. In the regulation we identify 28 substances of concern that will have to be monitored and reported. These include all emissions of nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide and carbon dioxide, which contribute to smog, acid rain and climate change.

We will continue consultations and modify the regulation so that all other industry sectors will be required to report on their emissions as of January 1, 2001.

The government believes that reporting is an important component of our actions to improve air quality, because for the first time we'll have real information about what emissions are being put into our air and by whom.

But more than this, we believe the new reporting requirement will lead to improved public accountability for all sources of air pollution in the province; province-wide emission reductions as the public's right to know motivates companies to reduce their emissions; a level playing field for companies in all economic sectors in the monitoring and disclosure of environmental pollutants; a mechanism for tracking the progress of the ministry's air

quality initiatives; a way for us to measure if our policies are having the desired and necessary impact.

As we move forward to make our air cleaner, reporting will lead to increased public awareness. This is vital to ensure companies understand and are responsible for their emissions. Both the government and the public must know what improvements are occurring, which initiatives are having a positive effect and what the possible business impacts are.

This initiative works alongside our other aggressive new measures to attack air pollution in Ontario which were announced on January 24. I want to briefly review these measures and then talk about where we are today and what has happened in the past few months.

The key new measures in our program are some exciting things like the establishment of mandatory caps on smog and acid rain-causing emissions; introduction of emissions reduction trading to give businesses greater flexibility to meet tough new standards; and the establishment of environmental performance standards for any electricity that is produced in or imported into Ontario. These measures establish a clear framework for business to begin to focus on its role in helping to improve air quality.

It is also important to note that these reductions in annual emission caps are only the beginning. Ontario has aggressive long-term total emission reduction targets. We are committed to a 45% reduction in emissions of nitrogen oxides by 2015, from a 1990 base year. We are also committed to a 50% reduction in the emissions of sulphur dioxides by 2015 from our Countdown Acid Rain strategy. Our commitment to these long-term targets includes a fair share reduction by the electricity sector.

In addition, Ontario is committed to meeting or exceeding US Environmental Protection Agency emission standards for utilities once they are established. I want to say today that if these standards are not as stringent as those in Ontario, Ontario will stay with its own targets. That is why Ontario supported the ruling by the US EPA that required a number of states to reduce emissions of smog-causing pollutants and why we became a respondent in the case when it was appealed. That is also why we were so pleased by the decision of the US Court of Appeals that supported the earlier ruling.

With more than one half of Ontario's smog originating from US sources, we had a vital interest in the decision. We will continue to be vigilant about all sources of increased air pollution, whether emanating from within or outside the province, and we'll maintain our commitment to meet or exceed the US standards.

Finally, my ministry has started discussions with other major sources of emissions in Ontario and other stakeholders to find the scope, timing and implementation of emission limits from other sectors in the province. To meet these long-term targets we need reductions from all emitters.

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I'm proud of these measures and I'm also proud of Drive Clean, which is living up to our early expectations.

More than five million vehicles will be covered by the program when it is fully implemented. It will reduce smog-causing pollutants from vehicles in its program area by 22%.

We are investing over \$4 million to upgrade our air monitoring network, and we are developing approximately 120 human health and environmental air standards in the first major overhaul of air standards in more than 20 years.

To enforce our environmental rules, this government will establish the toughest penalties in all of Canada against those who pollute the environment. Further, we will create a SWAT team to increase enforcement activities through inspections, investigations and prosecutions, and we will set up a pollution hotline to take calls from anyone who suspects that a company or individual is polluting the environment. These initiatives and commitments are appropriate to review during this Earth Week.

Now I invite you, Mr Speaker, and all members to make your own commitment to the environment. Please join me in recognizing this as Earth Week, and Saturday as Earth Day. It is important that we reflect on what we can all do to improve our quality of life through a cleaner environment.

Environmental protection knows no borders, and no one has a monopoly on good ideas. Protecting our environment must be a team effort; it depends on dedication and thrives on the relationships that are built. Individuals, communities and businesses across the province are committed to making improvements to the environment, and this government is equally committed to this goal. But clean air cannot be the responsibility of just some businesses or just the government. In fact, there must be action not just across Ontario, but across Canada and North America if we are to achieve the government's clean air targets. This means the involvement of all economic sectors and people, and of communities in all regions of the province. Clean air is everyone's business. It must be.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I thought this was a statement on volunteer week, not on Earth Week, because most of the things that you do are voluntary for those who are the polluters in the province. You believe in that voluntary approach. The word went out to your employees early on in your term that they should take a business-friendly approach rather than enforcing laws as they used to be enforced in this province.

I think we could describe today's statement, and I guess William Shakespeare describes it best, as *Much Ado About Nothing*. Once again you have many words on paper, but no action, no real enforcement, no real commitment on the part of your government. In fact, I have to agree with Bill Murdoch that unfortunately the Premier chose a minister who would do exactly what he was told to do. That's what Bill Murdoch, the Conservative member for Bruce-Grey, said. I'm only quoting Bill on that particular occasion.

Now, you've got them self-monitoring. What you have to have, of course, is a good, strong team of Ministry of the Environment staff to take samples once in a while, to walk in once in a while and test to make sure those samples are in fact valid. What you've done instead is you've fired out the door one third of the staff of the Ministry of the Environment, you've cut the budget by over 40% in the Ministry of the Environment, you've tied their hands behind their backs, and then you come in with some words this afternoon, words that cannot be translated into action.

You have a chance. You are considered now to be the second worst polluter in North America, next only to Governor Bush's Texas, which is considered to be the worst in North America by independent organizations. Your fines are down to the lowest level ever. Your prosecutions and fines are way down because you're simply not chasing the people who are violating the laws of the province, as used to happen.

There's over a 200% increase in toxic waste coming into the province of Ontario that we're importing, and we're dumping a lot of it in a questionable dump in Sarnia at this time, which you allowed to reopen despite major problems there.

You've dragged your feet on the Kyoto Protocol. In the federal-provincial conference, you and the Minister of Energy of Ontario were out dragging your feet trying to prevent the federal government from taking strong action. You've refused to become meaningfully involved in a new Great Lakes agreement; you've run away from that particular agreement because you have nothing to bring to the table. You refuse to stipulate that the Lakeview generating station, one of the largest polluters in Ontario, a coal-fired generating station, be converted to natural gas fuel as a precondition of any sale. You've categorically refused to do that in this House.

You should be restoring the staff—I thought the announcement today was that you were going to restore the 33% of staff that you fired out the door, and restore the budget cuts that you made.

You've weakened the Niagara Escarpment Commission, which one of the former ministers really cared about, by shifting it over to the Ministry of Natural Resources and then putting people who don't particularly care about the environment in some of those positions on the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

You've cut the number of air monitoring stations in the province. We used to have a lot of those stations in the province to monitor what was going on. Then, when we found somebody was in violation, we would prosecute them. Now everything is to be done on a voluntary basis.

You've cut the laboratories in this province that used to carefully analyze information that came in and prepare work for prosecutions.

You have simply abandoned everything that was meaningful in the environment.

You say now that you're going to have the toughest penalties. We already have very tough penalties, but you

simply don't enforce those. You're going to have some kind of SWAT team. You virtually dismantled the Ministry of the Environment investigations and enforcement branch that none of the polluters liked in its full status that it had before, where it was tough, where it was independent, where it had the resources. You simply cut those people out of there. Now you talk about bringing in a SWAT team. As for a pollution hotline, you have the spills hotline that could be used as a pollution hotline at any time.

You really have to decide whether you're going to take action. You don't have the resources; you don't have the staff to do so.

I think you've ignored the Ontario Medical Association, which is extremely concerned and has called for much tougher action. In fact, the noise that we hear today in Ontario, if you listen carefully, is the collective sigh of relief from polluters who, thanks to you and Mike Harris, dodged the pollution-fighting bullet prepared by the highly respected Ontario Medical Association.

What a disappointment this notice has been.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I just want to remind the minister of a press release I put out on August 10, 1999. I know he wasn't the minister then; he is now and he can do something about this. I put out a press release reminding people that I awarded Mike Harris the silver medal for coming second for having the largest pollution emissions among 62 North American jurisdictions. I remind the minister that Ontario came second to Texas in 1996. Since the Harris government took office, we've seen a cut of over 40% in the Ministry of the Environment budget. You are heading for the gold. We were hoping for an announcement today that would change the road you're on, but instead what we get is nice words but no clout there to back it up.

The minister's words sound like a good thing, but when you look at it carefully he's talking about a voluntary system, which means there's no level playing field across all industries.

About this SWAT team, I have to remind the minister—and he hasn't said how many staff he's going to rehire out of the 750 or more staff, mostly front-line staff, who have been cut, but I can guarantee you that it's going to be a fraction of those who have been laid off. If all those people hadn't been laid off, perhaps Ontario wouldn't have come second in 1996. He and his government have cut the ministry to the bone, and now you're talking about putting a tiny fraction of that money back. I can guarantee you that only a few of the people who have been laid off will be brought back.

I am really disappointed today, on this day before Earth Day. I thought the minister—because we have been asking questions in the House consistently about the biggest polluter in the whole of the GTA right now, and that's the Lakeview plant. Even at 20% right now, it's the biggest polluter, and if it's sold it could go up to running at 80% capacity. We've been asking the minister, Hazel McCallion has been asking the minister, for heaven's sake, and the city of Toronto—Jack Layton and others—

have been asking the minister to make an announcement about that and to come clean and tell the people of Ontario that they're going to do something about the biggest polluter in the GTA.

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I was hoping the minister would commit to making the conversion of Lakeview for coal to natural gas a condition of sale. Why didn't he do that? That would have meant more than anything else he talked about. The minister talks about beefing up enforcement and raising the level of fines. That's all very nice, but fines are down because the minister has no staff to be out there enforcing, inspecting and making sure that people are living up to environmental standards. There was nothing about that today.

The other thing I want to talk about—there's so much to talk about, because the government, since it came to office in 1995, has watered down practically every regulation and every environmental law that exists.

Let's talk about the Oak Ridges moraine for a second here. There's huge pressure on this government to freeze development in the Oak Ridges moraine until we can come up with a plan that everybody can live with and that is environmentally sensitive. The government is refusing to do that, knowing that our water is under threat. Minister, we would have liked an announcement today that you were going to freeze that development.

We've got some very urgent problems going on in this province right now. We've got water table problems. We've got low water levels. I asked a question yesterday about a company asking to take, in my calculations, billions of litres of water out of that river. No response. The minister didn't answer my question. We're concerned about low water levels. We're concerned about drought. No words about that. Unfortunately, today the minister had an opportunity to come clean and give us some answers about some huge environmental problems we're facing here, and he chose not to do that. I'm disappointed.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin oral questions, members may know that today is the last day for the great group of pages we have here. I was wondering if the members would like to thank this fine group that we have here for their fine work over the last few weeks. We thank all of the fine pages, and we wish them luck in their endeavours. I'm sure some of them may be coming back here as members a few years from now.

ORAL QUESTIONS

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier, and it has to do with the events surrounding the tragic shooting death of a native protester at Ipperwash Provincial Park in September of 1995. It's clear that there must be an appropriate public inquiry into the events surrounding this death. It's also clear that this inquiry cannot begin until it's certain it will not jeopardize anyone's right to a fair trial. What we would like today from you, Premier, is your word that there will be an appropriate inquiry into this shooting death and that it will begin as soon as possible after all legal hurdles are out of the way. Will you give Ontario that commitment today?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think what I had committed to do was to make sure that if, after all the cases were dealt with, there was information that anyone—and it could be you; it could be the George family, because it was a very tragic situation—felt had not yet come out, I would make sure that the appropriate vehicle was brought forward, be that a public inquiry, be that whatever vehicle was deemed appropriate at the time. So, you've got the cart before the horse. Let's wait until we get there, and if there's still information people would like to find out about that doesn't jeopardize any of the court cases, we'd like to get that information out too.

Mr Phillips: There is ample public evidence of the need for a public inquiry. What we want from you, Premier, is a commitment to what you are going to do. It's a very simple question. Can you tell Ontario exactly what you plan to do in the way of a full, appropriate, public airing of this issue? Can you be very specific so Ontario understands exactly what you plan to call or not call.

Hon Mr Harris: Let me say that in anything I have seen, there is no credible evidence. There's a lot of innuendo from people like you, which is very unfortunate, that may perpetuate that myth. What I have said, though, is that if there are any questions unanswered, we would particularly want that information out when we are free to do so to answer the innuendo and the false accusations. I'll take the appropriate steps, of course, at that time.

Mr Phillips: I would challenge you, Premier, to give me an opportunity in a public forum. You can set the terms of the public forum. I will repeat outside, in that public forum, everything I have ever said about Ipperwash. I challenge you today to call that public inquiry to allow me and all the others who have evidence to present it. It's not innuendo, it's not rumour; it is fact.

The George family fear that you will never call a public inquiry. They are using their extremely modest means to try to get at this through a civil court. You are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to battle this poor family in court. The family have said the civil suit will not be necessary if an adequate public inquiry is held.

Will you today tell the George family, tell the public, that you will give that commitment today? This will stop the expensive use of taxpayers' dollars that you're spending on your high-priced lawyers. But more importantly, it will give me and everybody else who is interested in the truth an opportunity, on the terms you set—I'll be there and I will repeat everything I have ever said about Ipperwash publicly. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the assurances I have given would indicate that there is no need for anybody to spend any money getting at the truth. I've been very clear, I've been very up front. I too would like to be free to refute the silly allegations you've made, and I will do that at the appropriate time, in the appropriate way, when the court cases are settled.

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. On April 11, in response to a question by my leader, Dalton McGuinty, you said, "We've taken action to make sure that the process around the sale of assets of the Ontario government is more accountable, more open and more transparent."

The Ontario Realty Corp deals with public lands, public money. It is not yours, it is not mine; it belongs to the taxpayers of Ontario. We believe that every single deal should be open to public scrutiny and accountability, and the taxpayers of Ontario should know the value they receive for that deal. You seem to talk the talk, but you don't walk the walk when it comes to deals at the Ontario Realty Corp.

Minister, in view of what you said in this House, can you explain to the House how all your rhetoric fits into the practice of your signing secret deals with developers around ORC lands?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I have no idea what the member opposite is talking about. Perhaps he could be specific. I've been very clear in this House, and you can check it out on the Internet, on the new sales procedures the board of directors of the Ontario Realty Corp have put in place. But if you have something specific you want to come forward with, by all means do so.

Mr Agostino: The minister said he has no idea. I have in my hand a secret deal that your government approved and you signed in regard to 145 Eastern Avenue. Let me tell you what the deal says. It says right in the deal that neither party shall disclose the terms of this agreement to anyone, and in addition, neither the vendor, the purchaser nor the tenant shall issue any press statements or speak to the media about this agreement.

Minister, we know you've seen this deal. We know you signed the order in council approving this deal. Clearly you were well aware when you signed this order in council on March 3, 1999, that there was a secrecy clause in the deal regarding 145 Eastern Avenue, a clause that prohibited anyone to speak about this deal, how much they paid for the deal and conditions of the deal.

That is not open. That is not accountable. That is not available to public scrutiny.

Again, can you tell us why, Minister, you would have signed such a deal, a secret deal with a developer, regarding taxpayers' land?

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Hon Mr Hodgson: If the member opposite would be so kind as to send it over, I will have a look at it.

If you're talking about the 145 Eastern Avenue deal, that property was marketed back in 1996. There was an agreement of purchase and sale that was entered into. It was J.J. Barnicke's firm that marketed it on the open market, advertised it in all the major newspapers including the Globe and Mail and sent out hundreds of packages of information about it.

The property, as you know, required an order in council, which I took forward to cabinet. That went up through the proper process, where it goes all the way up to the deputy minister who signs it. The questions that we asked: Was it marketed properly? Is it the right appraisal? There were two appraisals done. If you have any evidence that that was not in the public interest, by all means, send it over.

Mr Agostino: The evidence I have is that you approved and signed a secret deal and put in a statement that prohibited anyone from discussing publicly how much was paid for the land and the conditions around it. It is clear in the document; there is no question about it. It is your document that you have signed. It is your order in council. Let me repeat: "Neither party shall disclose the terms of this agreement to anyone nor make statements or speak to the media about this agreement or transaction." That is very clear.

We know you have signed a deal. We know you took it to cabinet, because we have the order in council. We have the agreement. Can you justify why you would have signed such an agreement that forbids public disclosure of a sale of public property?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Again, I would ask the member to send over the specifics so I can have a look at what he's talking about. If it's an order in council that you're talking about and my signature taking it forward to cabinet, this property had two appraisals done and it was marketed by J.J. Barnicke. If you say that's the wrong value and you're disagreeing with two certified appraisers who are qualified to know these issues, if you're talking about the property at 145 Eastern, that was part of the Ataratiri land that the city of Toronto bought and that the Liberals backed the loan on. They never checked the property for environmental problems on it. The province ended up taking it back and it cost the taxpayers \$340 million. I can't believe a Liberal is standing up here and talking about value to the taxpayers on that piece of land.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. In the weeks before the last federal budget, your government wasted millions of

dollars of taxpayers' money pushing the Liberals in Ottawa to recognize tax cuts as a greater priority than health care funding. You were very clear what you wanted: You wanted tax cuts. You hardly mentioned health care. On budget day, lo and behold, the Liberals in Ottawa fell in line with your priority. For every dollar they spent on tax cuts, they could find only two cents for health care. But the day after the federal budget you seemed to come out of your tax cut stupor and seemed to recognize that the real priority for Ontario citizens is to save medicare.

Your budget is coming up. Will you put your money now where your mouth is and ensure that in this budget the priority will be funding for medicare and not tax cuts?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Let me say very clearly that we did, I believe, run some ads encouraging the federal government that they needed to not forget tax cuts, so that we can have jobs and growth and opportunity in this country. The ads worked quite well, so we're quite hopeful that the very modest investment we're making now in some ads to try and secure \$1.7 billion that was slashed out of the health care budget by the Liberals will be just as successful. I think you would agree—quietly; you might not publicly—that this is a pretty sound investment and the right thing to do.

Having said all that, the answer to your question is, we don't think it's tax cuts to create jobs and prosperity or health care; we think it's both, and our budget will reflect that, as it did last year.

Mr Hampton: Premier, the part of your answer that I would agree with is, yes, you are wasting more money on more television ads. The latest ads are very puzzling indeed, because they claim that the only missing piece in Ontario's health care system is federal government funding. The reason that is so puzzling is because after you look at the ads it's pretty clear that the real piece that is missing is your plan to preserve medicare. We don't see it. We can't find it, and what's more, people across Ontario can't find it.

I've got the piece of the missing puzzle. It's called Stop Private Health Care, and I'll send it over to you so you can have it.

What we want to know about is this: Are you prepared to bring in legislation that will ban private hospitals and ban private clinics? Are you prepared to make that—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member's time is up.

Hon Mr Harris: The member recently jointly signed a letter with myself. Howard Hampton and Mike Harris—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harris: The Liberals, who are now coming to life, refused to sign the letter, I might add, and I think it's appropriate, as they howl now, that they don't care about health care.

I think the member was quite right to sign the letter. It was quite right in the letter pointing out—and in a vote of 57 to 25; 25 disgraceful Liberal votes who didn't seem to

care about the \$1.7 billion that was slashed by the federal government—the missing piece of the puzzle, if you like, is federal funding.

If you would call the number in the ads—and clearly we need to advertise so more Canadians and Ontarians know about the reforms that we are making and advances in primary care reform, in long-term care, in home care, in hospital—

The Speaker: Order. The Premier's time is up.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There's a prop in the House. It was our understanding those shouldn't be used.

The Speaker: The Premier will know props aren't fair, and I'm sure he won't use it.

Final supplementary.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Thank you, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. I will take care of it, as I always do.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I hope so.

The Speaker: The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, come to order, please. I give everybody a bit of a benefit of the doubt when they do stand up. Sometimes they get sent across, and I will take care of it. I thank the member for his—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I believe we're back to the final supplementary. The member for Hamilton West.

Mr Christopherson: While the Premier and the Liberals laugh about this whole situation, the reality is that the finance committee, in our pre-budget hearings, heard from Ontarians all across the province who talked about the real crisis that exists in health care, in education, in child care, affordable housing, the growing gap between the rich and the poor; the fact that there are more poor in deeper poverty than ever before; and the fact that you've frozen the minimum wage in Ontario for five years to the point that the US now has a higher minimum wage. Premier, all of this crisis is happening at a time when you're benefiting from an American-led economic boom.

What we want today is an assurance from you that your budget is going to prepare the balance of Ontarians for the recession that, unfortunately, is going to happen. If all of this is happening during an economic boom, we need assurances from you that you're going to deal with these issues, so when the recession hits these people will survive—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member, take your seat. Order. We can't have a situation where the government members are shouting. They don't like it when their ministers get shouted at. I'm trying to keep order here, and I would appreciate it if the government members would let the member ask the question.

Member, continue please.

Mr Christopherson: Premier, your friends have benefited from the tax cut, but all of the Ontarians I have

mentioned, who are impacted on all these other issues, have been left out of your economic boom. What we need to know today is that your upcoming budget is finally going to change and you're going to deal with and address these issues to prepare this province for those darker times that are indeed coming.

Hon Mr Harris: Let me assure the member of a few things. The budget that will be delivered on May 2 by the Minister of Finance will be an historic budget. It will be the first planned and actual and real surplus in over 30 years. As well, this budget, just like previous budgets delivered by this government, will feature substantially more money for health care and, at the same time, tax cuts to create jobs and growth and prosperity and wealth to continue to build and undo the damage left by your party. Finally, let me say this: As long as the voters of Ontario don't make the same mistake they made in 1985 and 1990 and elect big-spending, wasteful governments, there will not be a recession in this province.

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SAFE STREETS LEGISLATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. I want to read to him a recent letter he should have received. It goes like this:

"The Beaverton Lions Club holds a toll bridge once a year to help fund our children's swim program in which over 100 kids from the area take part.

"We have received a letter from ... the regional municipality of Durham stating that because of Bill 8, the Safe Streets Act, 1999, our fundraising event will no longer be permitted.

"Without our toll bridge event we cannot raise the funds required to run a swim program this summer, having received such short notice re: Bill 8.

"It is our hope that the Ontario government will issue a cheque for \$3,500 to cover the balance of the swim program. If this is not possible, then perhaps the Ontario government will run the program themselves. We assume you agree that the youth of the area need to learn to swim since they live ... beside Lake Simcoe."

Minister, is your cheque in the mail? Or are you going to show some leadership and scrap this very unwise piece of legislation?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I thank the leader of the third party for a great question. He draws attention to a beautiful part of Ontario, Beaverton, which happens to be on the shores of Lake Simcoe and an important part of the riding that I represent. The concern that they have is legitimate and they want me to look into it to help the youth in our riding, and I'm more than pleased to do that. I just want to tell you that the steps we will take I will refer to the Attorney General to deal directly with Durham council, which I understand has some misinformed councillors on it who need to be advised on how to help the youth in our riding.

Mr Hampton: The part of the letter that I left out is because of the fact that this is a legal opinion. They asked their lawyers to look at the bill and the legal opinion that came back is that clearly these kinds of events are not permitted. The same thing is happening in Uxbridge. The same thing is happening with the Niagara firefighters, who cannot conduct their fundraising activity for muscular dystrophy. In fact, it's happening in municipality after municipality. Your so-called Safe Streets Act does nothing with respect to helping squeegee kids get off the street, but it's hurting all kinds of legitimate charities.

You say the Attorney General is going to do something. What are police supposed to do, call up the Attorney General in each instance and say, "Well, Attorney General, have you changed your opinion today?" Look, it was unwise legislation. It's hurting charity after charity across the province. Why don't you have the good sense now to repeal the legislation so people can go out there and do the good fundraising they want to do for the charities they support?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'll let the Attorney General inform the people of Beaverton.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The government's concern is always the safety and security of people. It's public safety legislation that's been very effective, according to Chief Fantino, in the city of Toronto.

With respect to the charity, I met with the muscular dystrophy people. I've written to the municipalities around the province, pointing out, as I'm sure the member would know if he read the legislation, that there's a difference between the definition of "highway" in the Highway Traffic Act and "roadway," which is what is used in Bill 8. In fact, the Muscular Dystrophy Association is satisfied now that they have discussed it with me and they understand the definition of "roadway." Indeed Shinerama in London wrote: "It's the intention of our foundation and Shinerama committees across Ontario's colleges and universities to continue their successful campaign. In addition to raising awareness and funds for CF research, it is our primary goal that all students conduct themselves in a safe manner."

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Chair of Management Board. Your government just finished a carpet bombing of the community of Penetanguishene with propaganda ads paid for by the taxpayers of this province: \$16,000 on a saturation campaign on the radio, about \$4,000 on a one-sided propaganda piece mailed to everybody in that particular community, a slanted poll, almost a push poll, by Angus Reid, hired by you, costing thousands of dollars. You say you believe in democracy, Minister. How is it you can justify this kind of squandering of about \$25,000 in government propaganda to try to force upon the people of Penetanguishene an American-style privatized superjail

when others, who are opposed to this, do not have the same resources you have to put forward their arguments?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I know the Minister of Correctional Services would like to answer this.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I think the honourable member would have said that we should be out communicating with the people of Penetanguishene. In fact, that's what I was doing last Tuesday. I went up to meet with the residents, to speak with them and hear their concerns about that particular facility, and indicate to them that it is our concern and our objective, as we reform the correctional system in this province, to make sure we have a safe system, which is the concern of the residents of Penetanguishene and the residents who live in and around any other facility in this province, to make sure it's an effective correctional system that is producing the results for the sizeable amount of money we're spending on corrections in this province.

Only you, sir, would think it acceptable to have the second-highest cost system in North America, and producing terrible results with 80% of the people coming in the front door reoffending again. Only a Liberal would think that would be a measure of success.

Mr Bradley: As to the Chair of Management Board and the propaganda war of this government, I say the people of Penetanguishene were enraged when they saw how much you spent.

The people of Ontario have been greeted with yet another ad that you people are putting out, another launch of a television ad, another misuse of taxpayers' dollars to purvey blatantly partisan propaganda, and Jane and Joe Taxpayer have to pick up the tab, another \$2 million to be squandered on top of the \$3 million you've already wasted.

Here's what a former Speaker, Chris Stockwell, had to say about this:

"Personally I would find it offensive if taxpayers' dollars were being used to convey a political or partisan message. There is nothing wrong with members debating an issue and influencing public opinion. In fact, it is part of our parliamentary tradition to do so. But I feel that it is wrong for a government to attempt to influence public opinion through advertising that is paid for with public funds."

Minister, will you now abandon the kind of propaganda campaign with taxpayers' dollars that your government has embarked upon once again and will you have the Progressive Conservative Party—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The member's time is up.

Hon Mr Sampson: I should say that only a Liberal would say it should be a secret that we keep from the people of Ontario that we have such an expensive—

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Point of order.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Speaker, the question has been placed to the Chair of

Management Board appropriately. This minister does not—

The Speaker: Would the member take his seat. The member will know that the question can be referred. It has been referred. Keep the clock stopped. The member on a point of privilege.

Mr Duncan: Mr Speaker, the standing orders, as I understand them, allow a minister or the Premier to refer a question to the appropriate minister. In this case, it has to do with the general policies—

The Speaker: I thank the member. It's the same as the point of order, the point of privilege. It dealt with a situation dealing with the minister's portfolio and he referred it. I can't—

Mr Duncan: Point of order.

The Speaker: No, he's not going to get up again. We've made the ruling and we're not going to have you stand up again. I say to the member, I will listen to your point of order but we're not going to keep going back on this. I've made my ruling.

New point of order.

Mr Duncan: Can you explain to me how that minister answers for health ads?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Duncan: Get them under control.

The Speaker: How about you get under control and listen and stop while I'm speaking. We're not going to continue to have the point of order. I'd appreciate it if the member wouldn't push his hands at the Speaker when I'm standing.

1430

Mr Duncan: It's the fairness of the ruling.

The Speaker: Order. This is the member's last warning. One more time and I will name him.

Mr Bradley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If the minister won't answer the question, I withdraw the question.

The Speaker: The minister was already up. The minister may continue. Start the clock.

Hon Mr Sampson: I'm sorry that raising the facts about corrections—and the question was addressed to me—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Hamilton East, come to order. This is his last warning as well. It's the end of the week. We're not going to put up with shouting across, or the members can go back to their offices.

Hon Mr Sampson: I'm attempting to respond to the question that was raised about corrections and the corrections business that I have a responsibility to the people of Ontario to direct.

Interjections.

The Speaker: That's it. I'm afraid I have to name the member for Windsor-St Clair. I would ask him to withdraw. Mr Dwight Duncan, please withdraw from the chamber.

Mr Duncan: You should be more fair in your rulings.

The Speaker: I will remind the member, if the Sergeant at Arms has to remove the member, he will be out for this entire session, and that's until we prorogue. That could be two years.

I would ask the Sergeant at Arms to come.

Mr Duncan left the chamber.

The Speaker: Now, back to the Minister of Correctional Services for the answer.

Hon Mr Sampson: I simply wanted to put on record, the member was talking about our—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for St Catharines as well: This is your last warning. We're not going to continue to shout across during this. I've made my ruling, and we have to live by the ruling that the Speaker makes. We cannot have a situation where members yell across when the Speaker is standing. It's his last warning as well.

Hon Mr Sampson: I was just attempting to clarify the comments I was making to the earlier question. The people of Penetang were actually quite willing to hear from us when we went up there. In fact, the chair of the committee that is the public liaison committee there indicates that she felt that we were listening and that our opportunities to attend there were dealing with their particular safety record.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Sampson: The member laughs, but this is a quote by her in the local free press. It's the obligation of this government to communicate what it's doing. Certainly around Penetang, I'm quite happy to communicate our commitment to public safety.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, it appears that child pornography-related crimes are on the rise, especially with the use of the Internet. I understand, however, that some cases are not being proceeded with. As the member for Scarborough Centre, I can assure you that this greatly concerns both myself and members of my riding. Could the Attorney General please explain to the House why this is happening?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for Scarborough Centre for the question. We do take the issue of child pornography very seriously in Ontario. As a government, we have a responsibility to do everything that we can to protect society's most vulnerable members from this harm of sexual exploitation.

With today's technology, it is true that children are at substantial risk because child pornography can be spread anonymously. Child pornography charges like possession are often laid in conjunction with other sexual offences like assault, and the crown proceeds with the charges that have the greatest prospect of conviction and that provide the greatest sentences. This is consistent with the directives in the Crown Policy Manual.

The decision to continue or terminate a prosecution is among the most difficult that crown prosecutors have to make. Between June 1, 1999, and December 31, 1999, the crown withdrew almost 66% of all child pornography charges. Plea resolutions are conducted with the aim that it is in the public's best interests for the crown to proceed with charges that have the greatest sentence.

Ms Mushinski: Minister, I wonder if you could please inform this House what the government is doing to help reverse this trend in order to protect Ontario's children.

Hon Mr Flaherty: Last year, British Columbia's Supreme Court struck down the Criminal Code provision that outlaws the possession of child pornography, on the grounds that the prohibition violates Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In Ontario, the laws against child pornography continue to apply. As Attorney General, I have a special responsibility to be vigilant in protecting our children. Protecting children by cracking down on pornographers, sex offenders and sex predators is a priority of our government. That is why on January 18 and 19 this year, I appeared before the Supreme Court in Ottawa to offer Ontario's arguments supporting the constitutionality of the law against child pornography. The federal legislation is an appropriate response to this risk of harm by the proliferation of child pornography in our society.

I can add that I am currently reviewing the entire Crown Policy Manual, including how crowns determine when to proceed to ensure that children are protected and that crown prosecutors continue to prosecute—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

LITHOTRIPSY

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is to the Minister of Health and it concerns kidney treatment services in eastern Ontario.

You will know, because all members will know, that there are few things more excruciatingly painful than kidney stones. You'll also recall that six months ago I stood in this chamber to ask you why the over one million people in eastern Ontario are still left with the situation where we have a lithotripter, bought and paid for by hundreds of volunteers, that sits in a crate in the Ottawa Hospital two years after its purchase, and your ministry and your government have still to authorize the operating funds to allow that lithotripter to go into service to assist those over 600 kidney patients from places like Pembroke, Perth, Prescott and Ottawa-Carleton who, in the absence of that machine working at the Ottawa Hospital, have to go down the road, often in terrible pain, to Montreal, Toronto and London.

When, Minister, are you going to fund that lithotripter at the Ottawa Hospital so this unfair situation will come to an end?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The member perhaps does recall that the Ottawa Hospital chose to purchase the equipment

without any ministry endorsement or approval that the operating funds would be provided. At the present time, all urgent cases are treated within 48 hours of referral. The ministry has refused the proposal in the context of need for additional services in the province of Ontario, and at the present time we do have the capacity within the province to meet the needs of all of the people. There are currently two lithotripters in operation, one in Toronto and one in London.

Mr Conway: I had a constituent in my office the other day from Pembroke and he told me what he faces. Oh yes, he can go down the road to Montreal and down a much further road to Toronto and London, in excruciating pain, or he can go to the Ottawa Hospital and have very significant and invasive surgery, in all cases at two and three and four times the cost of having that done with that lithotripter which is in a crate at the Ottawa Hospital.

I'll just ask my friend the minister, humane person that I know her to be, are we telling people like my constituent in Pembroke and hundreds like him, not only in the Valley but in Ottawa-Carleton itself, that in this terrible condition of excruciating pain they should, at their own expense, get in a car and drive down that 401 by Kingston, by Cobourg, by Toronto, if you can get by it, to a lithotripter in London? Is that what we're telling them, when hundreds of patients, volunteers and families have raised the nearly one million bucks so that lithotripter can sit in a crate at the Ottawa Hospital?

Our cup runneth over. We're going to have a budget released here in a couple of days. Surely there's enough money in the provincial treasury to provide the money to make operational that lithotripter, which for two years—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the member's time is up.

Hon Mrs Witmer: As the member opposite knows, there was a full review of the situation undertaken. The Ottawa Hospital does agree that the programs in London and Toronto do have access capacity. I want to remind the member that the lithotripsy volumes have remained constant in Ontario, approximately 5,000 per year. We will continue to review the need for additional services, but I can assure you that at the present time all urgent cases are treated and we do have the capacity in the province to treat those who need the services.

1440

MCMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. As you will recall, when our party sat in opposition I was our party's culture critic, and I have maintained a keen interest in the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. I have raised this matter in the House before and members will know that the gallery in Kleinburg contains a magnificent collection of Tom Thompson and Group of Seven paintings that were donated by Bob and Signe McMichael to the province of Ontario in the 1960s. They

were donated for the public and for the preservation of an art form that is essential to Canadian history.

I understand that the minister has called in an independent auditor to examine the financial position of the McMichael gallery and that this review springs from the debate over what kinds of art will be exhibited at the gallery. Would the minister please update this House about the mandate and progress of this audit that she's ordered.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank the member for Waterloo-Wellington for his question and also for the commitment he has to the people in his riding.

I would like to say, first of all, that the board of directors of the McMichael art gallery came in to see me in early April and suggested at that point that they had some concerns with the deficit they thought they might run as of March 31. With the help of the board that came to see me, we decided that we should call in auditors and also call in an executive, a person from management, who would be able to help them to assess the financial situation at the McMichael art gallery. We're in the process now of waiting for the report to come back from both groups and when it does we will look at what we can do to help the McMichael art gallery. Of course, we're all concerned about the financial health of the McMichael and we're all committed to preserving this national treasure for future generations.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I appreciate that the minister has taken all of the necessary steps to ensure the long-term viability of the McMichael collection. My question is to the state of the collection itself. Bob and Signe McMichael are constituents of mine. They live in Caledon and, as such, I have spoken to them on many occasions on this topic. Mr McMichael in particular is concerned with two issues. He's concerned with the direction the gallery has gone, in that it has departed from the original intent of the gallery in acquiring pieces that were contrary to the original purpose of the gallery. He is concerned that their very generous and culturally significant gift to this province is in some sort of jeopardy. My question is to the minister as to what assurances she can give to this House, the McMichaels and the people of Ontario on these matters.

Hon Mrs Johns: I appreciate the concerns the member has because the McMichaels live in his riding and because, of course, the McMichael collection is the largest collection dedicated entirely to Canadian culture and heritage and art in the world. So I think it's important that we all work towards preserving that.

Once we understand the financial pressures that the board is facing at this particular point, and the management needs and requirements we have there, I think then we can look at where we should go to make sure that the McMichael gallery is put on a fair and level footing so that it will in the future continue to be the great gallery that it is.

Let me say that it was a very generous gift that was given to the province, and therefore to everyone in the province of Ontario, by the McMichael family back in 1965, and any actions we take will provide the necessary reassurances to the McMichaels and to the people of Ontario—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

OFFICE OF THE WORKER ADVISER

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): My question is to the Minister of Labour. It was just 10 days ago that you responded in answer to a lob-ball question from one of your own backbenchers with regard to the Office of the Worker Adviser. You said, "We have decided not to discuss any reduction, any kind of downsizing at this time"

Once again, the words of this government and your actions are two very different things. As a result of the 5% cut that you leave the impression is not going to make any difference, so there won't be any reduction or downsizing, pink slips have now been issued to front-line workers at the Office of the Worker Adviser. These people are going to be laid off, and what we want to know from you is, just how is that supposed to help injured workers when you lay off front-line workers?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): If you read on with that particular quote, we said the workers office would have to live by the same standards that every other government agency, board and commission and ministry would live by, which was a 5% reduction. The fact of the matter remains that they're choosing to manage their money effectively and efficiently on their own. Their decision is, "We can best manage our money by moving forward on these kinds of layoffs and putting the money elsewhere."

If you want to look at line-by-line budget analysis, the cut was no different than anyone else's. They have the autonomy to take decisions, as they should, to effectively manage their operation. I agree with that. That's why they were put in place. You wouldn't expect me to jump in and micromanage the operation. If that's the way they choose to do their business, it's an acceptable practice adopted by that organization. I don't think we, as this Legislature, should then be honour bound to jump in and tell them how to run the operation. Either they're doing a good job or they're not. You keep telling me they're doing a good job.

Mr Christopherson: Minister, for you to suggest that it's OK to be treated like everyone else is to say that it's all right if they end up in the same situation as Henderson hospital in Hamilton or the Family Responsibility Office, which is an absolute disaster right now. It is no excuse and no answer whatsoever. The fact of the matter is that you are the government that's paying the head of the WSIB \$770,000 a year. Now, as a result of your cuts to the Office of the Worker Adviser, we will have injured workers who, in addition to waiting two years to get to a

tribunal, will now stand in line for what, another two-year wait because the front-line workers aren't there?

The fact of the matter is that this government has never cared about workers and their rights. This is just one more example of how you treat workers and, for that matter, injured workers in this case. Take another stab at answering how dropping and laying off front-line workers is somehow good for injured workers.

Hon Mr Stockwell: This is quite a question from the member opposite. He wants to talk about the WSIB and the amount of money that we pay the president to run that corporation. You used the analogy. You brought it into the discussion. The simple fact of the matter is, when we took office, at the WSIB there was an \$11-billion unfunded liability. Yes, we recruited a darned good guy to run that place. Yes, we paid him market value out there, and that's a considerable sum of money. I don't deny it. But he has taken the unfunded liability—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister was patient while you asked the question. I would ask the member to be patient while the minister answers. Sometimes we don't like the questions or the answers, but you can't ask the question and then yell at the minister. You asked a very tough, forceful question. It's his turn to answer.

Hon Mr Stockwell: The gentleman we've hired to do this job has taken the unfunded liability you left us, at \$11 billion, down to \$6.5 billion. He's also planning on retiring that unfunded liability in the not-too-distant future, ahead of schedule. You've got the nerve to stand in your place and complain about the money he's paid, leaving the mess that you left. He's cleaning it up, saving the taxpayers money, and you're telling me that that's a badly and poorly run operation.

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTIONS

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I'd like to know how you justify imposing your \$925 head tax on parents who are adopting internationally. Today I held a news conference with representatives of two agencies that facilitate international adoptions: the Children's Bridge and Open Arms to International Adoption agencies. As well, adoptive parents and their children were present.

More and more families continue to point out that your head tax is just not justifiable. Instead of your government making it easier to adopt, you're making it a lot more difficult. Erica Kerr, a mother in the process of adopting internationally, had this to say: "Adoption is about making families happen. In Ontario, adoption is about making families pay." Minister, will you today stand up in your place and revoke your \$925 head tax?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I undoubtedly would come to the same conclusion as the member opposite if the facts were as he

presented them at his news conference this morning. But I don't believe that to be the case. As I have said before, our government understands the huge challenges that families face when they seek to adopt abroad. These families are making a huge emotional and financial commitment, sometimes as much as \$30,000.

Last year the House and this government moved to implement the Hague convention on international adoption. The fee the member opposite describes is a fee for service. The taxpayers will still have to supplement the revenue from that fee in order to provide these important protections.

I heard this morning at the press conference that, simply put, all that was required on our part was to simply press a button. The member opposite actually said at the press conference that the new legislation required less work. I find it rather odd that the member opposite who pushed this issue so hard and said this additional work, this additional effort was required is now saying that it simply requires pressing a button and that no extra work is at all required.

1450

Mr Cordiano: The minister is blowing smoke. There are no additional costs involved for the ministry in these international adoptions

Minister, I want to ask you what you would say to Erica Kerr and thousands of parents like her. What does your tax say to Erica who's gone through thousands of dollars of blood testing, fertility drugs, and paid thousands more now to go out and adopt internationally? The pain and the suffering are huge. If Erica lived in the US, she would have access to a \$5,000 tax credit. If she lived in Quebec, she would receive a \$3,000 tax credit. In Quebec, in fact they've raised this tax credit. In the US, guess what? There's proposed legislation to raise it even more, to \$10,000.

Minister, your tax is just not justifiable. I want you to stand up today and say that you will revoke this tax, because it is inconceivable to me and to thousands of people across this province how you can impose a tax such as this when you have no additional costs involved. Are you going to do that today?

Hon Mr Baird: Again I don't accept the facts that the member opposite presented. What I would say to the individual the member referred to is that this government is prepared to respond to the calls for additional measures to provide for the safety of vulnerable children and to safeguard the huge emotional and financial commitments made by a parent. There is a provision within the legislation, and we certainly made allowance for it in terms of the budgeting, to provide a fee waiver for people who are in difficult financial circumstances, to ensure we don't stand in the way of any family trying to build a family.

If the member opposite wants to talk about tax levels and the treatment that the people south of the border and in Quebec and around the province face, I would indicate to him that this is the government that's cutting taxes, this is the government that's providing more opportunities for families, and this is the government that is lessen-

ing the financial burden on hard-working families in Ontario, so that they can have enough to raise their family and realize the dreams they have, whether it's owning their own home, putting their children through university—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): My question today is for the Minister of Labour. Some of my colleagues have been contacted by students who wish to apply for the Ontario Federation of Labour's annual Labour Honour Roll Scholarship. In order to qualify the applicants must do the following: They must interview a union leader, they must interview an MPP and they must submit an essay on the following topic, and I quote:

"It is rumoured that the Minister of Labour, Chris Stockwell, is planning to make further changes to this province's legislation that would make it harder for workers to join the trade union of their choice. Stockwell says these changes will make the workplace more democratic. Do you agree or disagree?"

That's quite a statement. I would ask the Minister of Labour today if he could explain to me and to other members of the House here the details of the initiative as described in that particular statement.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thank you for the question. I appreciate it. I know full well that the members in the House today have read the Blueprint commitments. In those commitments we talked about committing to improving Ontario's competitiveness. We talked about encouraging job growth. We talked in the last mandate about secret ballots and scrapping job quotas. We're committed to strengthening workplace democracy. Those are the kinds of things, I suppose, that the question is coming from. So the question is, will there be changes?

The government is committed to living up to their campaign promises, and having promised in the campaign that we are going to change some form of labour legislation that will make a more competitive and fair and democratic workplace, that should be the best response. When this will take place will be soon, and I could only hope that with those kinds of responses, a fair and open-minded person will see that this government is working hard for the good working people of Ontario.

Mrs Elliott: I know this is a very important file to all people who work in this province. Could you tell us when these changes are going to occur and whether or not you'll be consulting on these changes?

Hon Mr Stockwell: These changes will occur in this calendar year. Will we be consulting? I think this government, and I myself, have gone to great lengths to consult with a broad cross-section of the community in the province of Ontario. We will continue to consult in a broad cross-section of the province of Ontario because we know that consultation means that you can get input

from the people of Ontario and help draft legislation that affects positively the lives of the working people in the province.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Unlike my friend heckling opposite, and his passing of Bill 40, which included very little in the way of consultation other than with those of major labour unions, we and I plan to talk to many, many Ontarians, including labour unions. We will talk to them about the changes that we are going to bring forward that will make Ontario more competitive, will balance and democratize the workplace and will give us opportunity to prosper in the future. The people of Ontario should be happy this government was elected on these Blueprint documents because it means future employment, future growth—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Minister's time is up. New question.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Minister of Health. Next Friday, April 28, we'll be observing the National Day of Mourning for those workers who have died in Ontario's workplaces.

You know that Cancer Care Ontario has stated that at least 9% of all cancer deaths are from workplace carcinoma. This means that this year alone, more than 2,100 men and women will die because they work in workplaces with deadly levels of carcinogens.

Minister, over the last four years, I have urged you repeatedly to establish a provincial workplace carcinoma committee. Since I last asked you this question, 2,764 workers have died from workplace carcinogens. Will you stand in your place today, accept the recommendations from Cancer Care Ontario, northeast region, the five recommendations which will save lives? Will you put your briefing binder away, will you stand and, as the Minister of Health, commit to establishing a workplace carcinoma committee and provide the necessary resources to fulfil its mandate?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I would refer that to the Minister of Labour.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thank for the question. Obviously it's a question that every member in this House would have the same opinion about on the concerns and issues that are out there facing people in this delicate situation.

I met with the member opposite on this issue exactly in Sudbury this summer and we had discussions with affected workers in the communities. The situation is that we would be reviewing it and we would continue to undertake to review the situation with respect to the committee itself. We are constantly on the move with respect to acquiring the information, dealing with the situation and dealing with those people who have acquired this terrible disease in the workplace. We would continue to do that, and I will give you my undertaking that as we get

closer to the decision on that one, I will continue to meet with you. I will go back to Sudbury and meet the same folks that you brought in to get the decision to them as quickly as possible.

Mr Bartolucci: Thank you, Minister, but it's more than a Sudbury problem, as you know. Indeed, it is a health problem, but if it's a multi-ministerial approach that we are going to use, all the better. But in the next 15 years, the total number of new cancer cases is going to rise by 70%. Northeastern Ontario has a 30% higher incidence of lung cancer than anywhere else in Ontario. This obviously translates into greater percentages of workplace carcinoma deaths.

Canadian Cancer Statistics 2000 indicates that there are 50,000 new cases of cancer in Ontario. As you know, that means that there are more people dying in the workplace than ever before. Minister, will you please commit today to establish now a multi-ministerial provincial workplace carcinoma committee?

Ministers, you are not the cause, and I don't want to infer that you are the cause, but as ministers you can be the biggest part of the cure. You have the ability to save lives. Will you please, please, announce the establishment of a provincial workplace carcinoma committee before the end of this session?

1500

Hon Mr Stockwell: I thank the member for the question. It's clearly a non-partisan question and I appreciate the way it was placed.

This government is very serious with respect to those occupational exposure limits where they work. I think we're the first government in 15 years to actually update the occupational exposure limits that are in the workplaces people work within. We did that because we believe that a workplace should be safe and monitored and protected by the government involved, and that's why we took those kinds of decisions.

The question with respect to interministerial: Certainly that's something we can discuss, and I know the Minister of Health and others would be very interested in having that discussion. As far as the undertaking to get back to it before we rise in this session, I'm not sure I can give you that undertaking. What I can say is that we will take this issue, we will discuss it interministerially, and I will get back to you as soon as possible and let you know what our decision is.

We don't take this lightly. I know that you don't. I've met with people who have been involved in this and workers who were involved. We understand that it crosses political boundaries. We respect your question and I hope we can work together and get a positive response.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the minister responsible for children. I understand that yesterday the minister announced the appointment of the early years task group, which was one

of the recommendations made in the Mustard-McCain Early Years Study, which was a study commissioned by our government in our first term of office.

Could the minister please advise the House who will be sitting on this task group?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I'd like to thank the member for Waterloo-Wellington for this question.

The early years task group will provide advice to the government on key elements and standards for a successful province-wide early years program. I am very happy to have the privilege of reading the names of this task group into the record of Hansard in this chamber today: Philip Donne, president of Kellogg Canada, will chair the early years task group. The other members include Graham Clyne, Julie Desjardins, Nadine Amelia Jones, Nova Lawson, Dr Arlette Lefebvre, Terry McCool, OPP Inspector Robin McLary-Downer, Jane Steinberg and Dr Robin Williams.

Mr Arnott: I want to thank the minister and commend her for the outstanding work that she does on behalf of the children of the province of Ontario, and ask her, how will the early years task group contribute to the establishment of a province-wide early years program?

Hon Mrs Marland: The Early Years Study stated that early child development should be a shared responsibility involving parents, caregivers, communities, volunteers, business and government. The membership of this task group reflects expertise in each of these areas, and includes individuals with specialized experience in the fields of parenting and early child development, research and program design.

The task group will look at three key areas: (1) what early child development and parenting services should be provided, how and by whom; (2) how to generate support from the private and voluntary sectors for early child development and parenting; and (3) how to combine and expand community-based services to support young children and families.

We are pleased to have such a capable team to help us implement a province-wide early years program. The early years task group will deliver its final report to my office—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

FORESTRY AUDITS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Premier, on the eve of Earth Day, it's important to consider the state of our natural environment, especially Ontario's forests. The best way to determine the health of our forests is through the results of the independent forest audits, which your government is supposed to table every year for public review. The fact is that none of the six audits done in 1998 nor the 11 done in 1999 have been tabled by your government. We believe that the audits have not been tabled because the audit teams are very critical of your government's mismanagement of Ontario forests.

We have received a copy of the executive summary of the audit of the Temiskaming forest where the audit team concludes:

"Assessing sustainability was very difficult for the audit team. The only data available for our assessment of forest sustainability was suspect. An assessment of the Temiskaming forest could not be made due to the lack of relevant and credible information."

Premier, isn't it true that the reason your government has not released the 1998 and 1999 independent forest audits is because they are very critical of your government's negligence of our forests?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): No, it's not true at all. In fact, the audits are taking longer than we would have liked because of the substantial mess we inherited from your mismanagement of the forest industry.

Ms Martel: I'd point out that the audits we're talking about have been done under this government, so let me make that clarification.

Not only was the audit team very critical of this government's management of the Temiskaming forest, but the audit team also made it clear that this government asked the audit team to reconsider their findings, which were negative, before the audits were published. After the work was done and after the draft final audit was sent to MNR, the audit team was then asked by your government to review other revised government documents to see if the opinion could be changed. In the words of the audit team, this was "an extraordinary request." The audit team did review the government documents but still confirmed their earlier conclusion that an assessment of sustainability of this forest could not be made.

So, Premier, isn't it true that the other reason your government has refused to table the 1998-99 independent forest audit is because your government is trying to get the audit teams to change their negative findings?

Hon Mr Harris: No. Like a lot of the questions from the NDP, who left us the mess in the first place, it's not true at all. In fact, 11 audits are underway for 1999. They're in draft form, in various stages of completion. The six 1998 audits have not yet been finalized but will be soon.

But I have to say that we inherited one of the worst messes, not just financially and fiscally but in management of the forests. Quite frankly, this is a member whose leader exempted—exempted—his own region from having to do the audits in the first place. We take the audits very seriously. We welcome them. They're offering some very constructive suggestions on how we can clean up this horrible mess we inherited from the NDP.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Earlier today you named the member for Windsor-St Clair. As you named him, you provided options here. Could you please clarify? Is the member named only for today?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Yes. The Sergeant at Arms was approaching, but he did get up and leave before the Sergeant at Arms got there. So he is only out

for today. The members will know that if the Sergeant at Arms has to touch a member, then he is out for a longer period of time. But he was halfway up when he left on his own initiative.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Perhaps at this time I would put forward the expected business in the House next week.

On Tuesday afternoon, we expect to debate Bill 55, the Parental Responsibility Act.

On Tuesday evening, we expect to debate Bill 62, the municipal referendums act.

On Wednesday afternoon, there is a Liberal opposition day.

On Wednesday evening, we expect again to debate Bill 62, the municipal referendums act.

On Thursday morning, we will be discussing private members' business, ballot items 19 and 20.

On Thursday afternoon, we again expect to debate Bill 62, the municipal referendums act.

PETITIONS

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): This is a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas Mike Harris promised an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the 1995 election and renewed that commitment in 1997 but has yet to make good on that promise; and

"Whereas the Harris government has not committed to holding open consultations with the various stakeholders and individuals on the ODA; and

"Whereas Helen Johns, the minister responsible for persons with disabilities, will not commit to the 11 principles outlined by the ODA committee; ... and

"Whereas a vast majority of Ontario citizens believe there should be an ODA to remove the barriers facing the 1.5 million persons with disabilities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To pass a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act that would remove the barriers facing the 1.5 million persons with disabilities in the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and I will affix my signature hereto.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

DIRECT DEMOCRACY THROUGH MUNICIPAL REFERENDUMS ACT, 2000 LOI DE 2000 SUR LA DÉMOCRATIE DIRECTE PAR VOIE DE RÉFÉRENDUM MUNICIPAL

Mr Coburn, on behalf of Mr Clement, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 62, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in order to encourage direct democracy through municipal referendums, to provide additional tools to assist restructuring municipalities and to deal with other municipal matters / Projet de loi 62, Loi édictant, modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois en vue d'encourager la démocratie directe au moyen de référendums municipaux, de fournir des outils supplémentaires pour aider les municipalités restructurées et de traiter d'autres questions municipales.

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): Before I begin, I just want to express my sadness and my concern for the act of violence that happened in my community today at Cairine Wilson High School. As indicated by my colleague from Ottawa Centre earlier on, our thoughts and prayers do go out to the students and their families and in fact the student body and staff at Cairine Wilson for this senseless act of violence. There is nothing that rattles you more than something that happens in your community. It brings back to us the very real importance of safety in our communities. I think it's an indication to all members in this House that there's so much more work to be done to ensure that our communities are safe places for our families.

I'm pleased to begin debate today on second reading of Bill 62, the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, 2000. This is indeed a very important piece of legislation. If passed, it would give voters a much stronger voice in the local democratic process.

This bill outlines a number of initiatives, some of them housekeeping and some that have a direct impact on providing more accountability, accessibility and responsible government in some communities throughout Ontario.

Let me just outline the key provisions of the bill that relate to municipal referendums. Then I'd like to answer some of the concerns that have been raised about referendums.

The intent of the legislation is to permit municipal councils to ask voters clear, concise, unbiased, yes-or-no questions about issues that fall within the municipality's jurisdiction. I'm sure each and every one of you in this House has at one point or another been approached by frustrated residents who are trying to understand the proceedings of government and saying, "When you ask a

question, why can't you just give a simple yes-or-no answer?"

That's what's intended in this bill with respect to referendums. It's to make it very clear and concise in a yes-or-no format. If at least half of the eligible electors vote on a question, the results would indeed be binding. Council would not be able to ignore voters or ignore their wishes, because of the binding condition. A council would be legally obliged to act on the results.

As things stand now, municipalities can ask all sorts of questions, some of them politically motivated, and they are not bound in any way by the results. In recent elections, many municipalities have asked questions about matters over which they have no jurisdiction to implement. The voter response to such a question is entirely meaningless if the municipality can't do anything about it. Of course, maybe that's human nature, where we have this rampant desire to make comments about other areas of jurisdiction and make our views known in areas where we really have no control.

The government believes if a municipality can't do anything about a particular issue, then there's no point in putting that question on the ballot, and I might add, at great expense. That's a waste of taxpayer time and money. Municipalities will only be permitted to hold referendums about issues that fall within their jurisdiction to implement. Some concerns have been raised about that and I'll speak to them in a minute, but first I'd like to cover some of the other provisions in the bill.

The province already has the authority to put a question on a municipal ballot if it wants to test the local opinion on a local matter. That authority will continue. If that happens as part of a regular municipal election, of course the province would pick up the reasonable costs of meeting public notice requirements. As a matter of fact, the cost of meeting those public notice requirements is indeed a major cost of a referendum.

Municipalities would not be bound by the results of questions placed on the ballot by the provincial government. The province will also be able to prohibit questions that concern broader provincial issues. I'll have more comments about that in a minute.

First, let me speak a moment about what "binding" means. If a municipality asks a question and at least half of the eligible electors vote on that question and a simple majority vote yes, then council would be obliged to do everything within its power to implement the results in a timely manner. Furthermore, if a bylaw or a resolution is required to implement the will of the people, it would have to be presented to the council within 180 days after the voting day. On the other hand, if at least half the eligible voters vote and a simple majority vote no, council must abide by that decision for at least three years.

The legislation would also ensure that the public is involved in the process of putting a question on the ballot. The municipality would be required to begin the process at least 180 days before voting day. Council would have to authorize the referendum by bylaw. Voters would have to be given at least 10 days' notice of council's intention

to pass such a bylaw. Within 15 days of passing of that bylaw, the council would have to let voters and the province know the exact wording of the question and the implications of voting yes or no. Then any elector, or the provincial government, would be able to appeal the wording of the question to the chief electoral officer of Ontario. This could occur, for example, if the elector felt the wording of the question was unclear or was in some way biased.

This process, including the appeal period, would allow for a campaign period for a referendum of at least 60 days, giving ample time to have all sides of the issue explored and debated. The bill contains provisions to allow some of these time frames to be shortened for this year only, having respect for some of the restructuring situations, and it will ensure that councils can, if they wish, ask questions as part of this November's municipal elections.

The Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, 2000, would also ensure that voters would know the potential costs and other implications of a decision that they were being asked to make. The bill would require full and accurate disclosure to voters of the impact of approving or not approving a proposal, including the financial impacts. Wouldn't that be a novel approach, to know exactly what you're getting into or what you're keeping yourself out of, before voting or having to make a final decision on it?

This legislation would also give the government the authority to set campaign financing rules for municipal referendums. The rules would be similar to those that candidates in municipal elections have to follow presently. Contributions from a person, corporation or trade union to any one campaign would be limited to \$750. Furthermore, council would not be able to spend public money to promote a particular position on a question. Voters would be able to make an informed decision based on all the facts with fair election funding in place.

Let me return now for a moment and talk about some of the concerns that have been raised about this legislation. I've heard criticism that the bill does not set out exactly what matters fall within municipal jurisdiction. Some people have said that the province will decide what falls within municipal jurisdiction and what does not.

I'd like to remind everyone that the Municipal Act and other provincial legislation affecting municipalities already set out quite clearly what municipalities can or cannot do. Generally, things that fall within a municipality's jurisdiction are those things that it can do something about, by bylaw or resolution. That might include, for example, the method of council election, at large or by ward; the frequency of garbage collection; smoking in public places; snowplowing of sidewalks; user fees, and the like. The legislation does allow the province to step in when a proposed question concerns an area of broad provincial interest, and that's an important distinction. Municipalities do have jurisdiction in some areas that have impacts that spill across their boundaries and affect other people in other municipalities. It is important that

the province have a mechanism for defending the broader interests of all Ontarians where that is appropriate.

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Another concern that has been raised is about the required 50% turnout in order to make a referendum result binding. It has been pointed out by some that voter turnout for municipal elections rarely goes over 50%, and that certainly is a fair observation. But isn't that the concern of all of us here? As a politician, when you put your name up for election and you express your views and your ideas on how you want to serve the people in a particular community, you do want voter turnout. That's one of the challenges in our society today in our democratic system, to get people out to the polls, when you get some very dismal turnouts and showing in the order of 20%, 25% and 30%. We believe that this initiative requesting a 50% turnout in order to make a vote binding will definitely create an interest if an issue has an impact on the community in one way or another. That interest and a voter turnout of that magnitude would do nothing more than support and encourage the democratic process. The threshold reflects the fact that a binding referendum has the effect of taking decisions out of the hands of locally elected council and gives voters the final say on an issue.

Keeping that in context, I believe that the requirement of a high voter turnout is not only justified but very important. Once again, if the issue galvanizes the electors it should draw at least half of them to the polls. We all certainly hope there would be that kind of interest in how our communities operate. If it isn't important enough to bring more than half of the voters to the polls, then of course the final decision would be up to council and it will be responsible to the voters for that decision.

Municipal elections, in my opinion, are underappreciated and do indeed deserve more attention. If putting referendum questions on a ballot helps to increase voter turnout, then democracy in the end is better served. Of course, if the voter turnout were less than the required 50%, this too gives the council of the day a strong indication of the voters' views, which they can consider during their debate. I, for one, would expect that a council would take into consideration both the result and the turnout when making a decision. Even without a binding result, the referendum results should impact council's decision.

Our government has consistently expressed our commitment to promoting ways in which local government can work effectively for voters and be more responsive to their wishes. This legislation will give voters more say in local politics.

Now I leave the subject of referendums and move on to some other parts of the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, 2000. Much of the bill deals with administrative matters that bring us closer to the goal of municipal reform in the regions of Haldimand-Norfolk, Sudbury, Hamilton-Wentworth and Ottawa-Carleton. For example, the legislation carries over certain specific powers from existing regions to the

new municipalities, and these include powers to enforce some of the bylaws such as bylaws governing regulation of parades. They include powers with respect to parks, waste management and fluoridation. The Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act also deals with a very important labour relations issue. It would clarify that collective agreements negotiated by the new municipality can provide an increase in compensation for the period between December 24, 1999, and the day before the date of a new collective agreement. This is an important change in this piece of legislation.

The legislation also ensures that the rural voice will not be lost in the new cities of Hamilton and Ottawa. During the process of approving the legislation for the new cities of Hamilton and Ottawa, concerns were expressed, quite vividly and with considerable emotion, about representation for the rural parts of the cities. The minister committed to providing more equitable representation from the rural areas. This has been accomplished. By providing two extra councillors for the city of Hamilton and one in Ottawa, we will ensure that rural interests have an adequate voice on council.

Just to expand a bit on the Ottawa situation and on an additional voice in the rural area of Ottawa, a lot of the growth and development in the official plans that are in place now with the present municipalities that are going to be combined into the one city by January 1, 2001—a lot of those official plans have growth areas enshrined in them: east, south and west. With those growth areas come, as we all know, concerns with new residents moving in and young families moving in. It is important to us that those concerns are brought and have adequate representation at the council table.

This does not prevent future councils from looking at aligning boundaries at a future time. Certainly, in communities where you have tremendous growth patterns, that becomes a housekeeping issue. That draws considerable debate, considerable emotion with respect to communities of interest and the like. That is something that has to be taken into account as populations grow and the makeup of wards changes in terms of numbers of population. With the rapid growth that we have and will continue to have in the new city of Ottawa, that's an issue the new council will be looking at, probably in a five- or six-year time frame.

The legislation also takes care of some housekeeping matters, deleting references in a number of acts to old regions and replacing them with new municipalities. For example, the Building Code Act would be amended to delete references to the regional municipalities of Sudbury and Haldimand-Norfolk. This is just one example of the sort of housekeeping amendments this legislation includes. There are other provisions that are specific to individual new municipalities.

The Fewer Municipal Politicians Act, for example, dissolved certain local roads boards around the Sudbury region where the new city would annex certain areas without municipal organization. Some of those roads boards also cover territory that will not become part of

the new city of Sudbury. This bill clarifies that only those parts of the local roads boards that would be within the new city's boundaries would be dissolved.

In the new city of Ottawa, this legislation would change the official French name from cité d'Ottawa to ville d'Ottawa. This was a request that had been acknowledged by the minister.

As well, the legislation contains changes to the regional and local councils of Waterloo and the restructured county of Oxford. These changes are being made in response to local requests.

In Waterloo, the legislation would create Waterloo's first directly elected regional council. The council would include 16 members consisting of a directly elected chair, the mayors of seven local municipalities, two directly elected councillors from Cambridge, four directly elected councillors from Kitchener and two directly elected councillors from the city of Waterloo. The regional chair and the eight directly elected councillors would not sit on a local council.

This change in representation was part of a locally directed reform package that was put forward last year by the Waterloo regional chair and local mayors. They said a directly elected regional council would improve direct accountability to the ratepayers.

We support renewed efforts to reduce duplication of effort and cost of municipal government in Waterloo. This legislation would give regional council the mandate it requested. We expect them to deliver the results that they promised to their taxpayers and to this government.

1530

This legislation would also reduce the total number of municipal politicians in the Waterloo region from the 63 elected in the last municipal election to 49. Including the mayor, the Cambridge council would be reduced from 10 to seven members of council; Kitchener council, from 11 to seven; the city of Waterloo council, from nine to six; North Dumfries council, from seven to five; Wellesley township council, from seven to five; Wilmot township council, from nine to five; and Woolwich township council, from nine to five.

In addition, this legislation would also give Oxford county's new council the legal authority it needs to proceed with its municipal election in November. Oxford county and its member municipalities developed a plan to reduce the size of council and create a more efficient local government. The Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, 2000, takes that plan and puts it into force. If this bill is approved, the bylaw setting council sizes passed by Oxford county and its member municipalities would be deemed to comply with the Municipal Act requirements. As a result, the county would be legally authorized to go ahead with a municipal election.

This act also addresses a concern the regional municipality of Halton had with one part of Bill 25, the Fewer Municipal Politicians Act, 1999. If you'll recall, Bill 25 gave voters the right to elect the Halton regional chair in the November 2000 municipal elections. The chair was

previously chosen by regional council and had a vote only in cases of a tie. Bill 25 did not change the circumstances under which the chair could vote. If this Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, 2000, is approved, Halton's chair will have a vote in all matters. It will make the chair more accountable to the public.

On another interesting note, and certainly what we believe to be a positive step, this bill would also give the people of Moosonee a direct say in who will represent them by making Moosonee a municipality. The Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, 2000, would allow local people to vote for a mayor and four councillors. This government is committed to building local autonomy, accountability and strong local governance. As it is now, the province appoints representatives to the Moosonee Development Area Board. This legislation would create a municipality in place of the board. The new town of Moosonee would come into being on January 1, 2001. Special arrangements would allow the area's current sources of funding to continue, recognizing Moosonee's unique circumstances and geographic location. Making Moosonee a municipality does not change the fact that there is no road access to the community, that unemployment is around 50% and that assessment is very low in relation to social service costs.

The members may recall the Savings and Restructuring Act of 1996, which created a new reform process for municipalities and counties, separated municipalities and northern municipalities. Bill 25, the Fewer Municipal Politicians Act, 1999, further modified that process and extended the minister's authority to appoint commissions. That authority was due to sunset at the end of last year.

This legislation follows up on the Bill 25 changes in a couple of areas. First, it gives the minister greater discretion when defining the area to be subject of a restructuring commission. Currently, when a minister is asked to establish a commission, he can appoint one for an area equal to or greater than the area requested. This legislation would allow the minister, where it would be appropriate, to appoint a commission for a smaller area.

It would also address an issue that sometimes affects the amalgamation of a county and a separated municipality. Each municipality sets tax ratios. The tax ratio, as you know, is the relationship between the tax rate for residential properties and the rate for other classes, such as commercial and industrial properties.

Currently, if a county in a separated municipality with different tax ratios amalgamate, they have to harmonize their tax ratios. This legislation would allow them to maintain different ratios. It would also allow them to use a method other than weighted assessment and the upper-tier levy for apportioning upper-tier costs.

Finally, the legislation would delete two provisions from the Fewer Municipal Politicians Act, 1999.

One, as promised, is the provision that allowed the Lieutenant Governor in Council to amend any law by regulation in order to implement the reform in the four

regions. This legislation takes care of the sort of house-keeping amendments that provision was intended to address.

The other provision to be deleted is the one in the Municipal Act that allows 75 electors or 10% of the electors in a municipality to petition for the appointment of a restructuring commission. Municipal councils are elected to make decisions on local matters, including local government, and that is one of the reasons that piece of the legislation has been deleted.

If this legislation is passed, 75 electors in northern areas without municipal organization would still be able to ask for a commission. But where there are municipal councils to deal with reform issues, it would be up to them to ask for a commission. We still believe that local solutions are the best way of achieving savings in our communities.

This legislation covers a lot of ground but there are important commons threads that link its various pieces: municipal reform and voter empowerment. It builds on the steps that we took last year with the Fewer Municipal Politicians Act. It puts together the legislative pieces to allow the new municipalities created by Bill 25 to move forward and it empowers voters by providing a way to make municipal referendum results binding on municipalities. This reinforces the plan that we have for future growth, to stimulate the economy, to provide a forum and an environment that encourages investment in our communities in Ontario.

We have had some considerable measure of success over this period of time with respect to amalgamations and savings that have been achieved and we have many good examples from which to draw across this province. You can take some of the achievements they've made and hold them up as appropriate examples of how to save money and effect good government for the ratepayers. Indeed, there are some situations where there still needs to be improvements but we have provided the tools for local councils and given them more authority to be able to make those decisions based on situations in their local areas that they are more familiar with than the provincial government can from afar.

This legislation is an important step towards direct democracy and greater voter empowerment in Ontario. It expands on savings, it expands on the elimination of duplication of waste, it encourages innovation and it encourages accountability from those of us who are in public office. That's something that many of my colleagues that I have worked with over the 18 years that I've been in politics have no problem with: being held accountable for the decisions that we make. This piece of legislation enables a number of communities in this province to take advantage of the building blocks we have put in place for better local government in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Comments and questions?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to follow the member and to comment on Bill 62, which is very important to the local and upper-tier levels of govern-

ment. I suspect that after Mr Coburn's comments I'll be making further comments. I just know that the Liberal Party has something to say right now.

The Acting Speaker: Further comments or questions? Member of Carleton-Gloucester.

1540

Mr Coburn: I was one of the fortunate ones after the election. The Premier has seen fit to have me as PA to Municipal Affairs. Certainly it's an area where I've enjoyed working with the residents in the city of Cumberland and, in my present capacity, with the residents of the riding of Carleton-Gloucester, being a servant and the vehicle by which to bring their concerns to this place or to the council table to make decisions to improve how their communities are governed. Many of them take an attitude about government: "You can't make change. There's no point going to address council and there's no point speaking to your local member, because change cannot be effected."

I think many of us in this place recognize that the democracy system we have does work. It gets frustrating from time to time. You seem overwhelmed by the magnitude of things and the issues that you have to deal with, but I think it's incumbent upon all of us in this place to stay committed to the cause, that we don't lose sight of the objectives—that we're here representing our residents, that we do want better democracy, that we do want more accountability. It's through pieces of legislation like this, where there has been consultation and lots of it—in Ottawa-Carleton, for example, for 30 years. It finally came down to the point that obviously you're not going to please everybody, but it's to pick the best of the best and then mould it into a piece of legislation that provides more predictability and accountability and provides a vehicle that works in the best interests of the ratepayers of Ontario.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to allow Mr O'Toole to continue with the debate. That was the intention, and we forgot to ask for that splitting of the time at the beginning of this debate. So if we could have unanimous consent to continue, I'd appreciate that.

The Acting Speaker: Unanimous consent? Agreed. Further debate, the member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would also thank our whip for straightening out that administrative issue. When I did stand, I was wondering—it showed 30 minutes and then all of a sudden it showed a minute and a half, which is the time for oral responses. Since I had about 45 minutes, I knew that I was going to run out of time very quickly.

I think Mr Coburn has talked about the legislation from the point of view of the parliamentary assistant. Of course he would have a message that it's his duty to communicate. Being from Carleton-Gloucester, he would be very interested in the changes that are occurring in Ottawa, as part of this legislation is the restructuring of four municipalities in Ontario. That is an important part of Bill 62.

I'm going to speak more to the part of the local democracy issue, the referendum piece, and hopefully stimulate some response from both the Liberals and NDP who are here today.

But before I make my formal comments I'd like to compliment the pages and specifically Jordyn Clark, who is the page from my riding of Durham. She also lives in the community of Blackstock. Her parents are here today in the visitors' gallery. I would say that her sister, Kelsey, is watching with interest and hoping that in the future she'll get a chance to serve here as page. To her parents, Janice and Jim Clark, I commend you for providing the opportunity for your family to participate in this great province and this great country.

That nicely fits into the participatory democracy aspect, as this is a participation game: democracy. In that respect, local referendums are a form of public participation. Direct democracy is a model that's commonly used in Europe, and more formally used in Switzerland on a rather regular basis. So I would say that the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, 2000, provides an important vehicle by which people, not just in my riding of Durham but all over the province, can participate in issues that affect their daily lives.

Of course, people would know that my riding is made up of eight lower-tier municipalities, each of which has a mayor. With your indulgence today, because I have the time, I will read them into the record.

The region of Durham is about 25 years old and has eight lower-tier levels of government. There's Ajax, which of course has a very colourful mayor, Steve Parish. Wayne Arthurs is the mayor of Pickering. In Uxbridge it's Gerri-Lynn O'Connor; in Brock township it's Keith Shier. In Scugog township, of course, is Mayor Doug Moffatt, a former member of this Legislature. And then we have Mayor Marcel Brunelle of Whitby, Mayor Nancy Diamond of Oshawa and, for the community that I currently live in, Clarington, it's Mayor Diane Hamre. I know the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale would know Mayor Hamre because she has a long relationship with the Liberal Party, which is great.

Local government is where I started. I served for a number of years at the local level in Clarington, as well as at the regional level in Durham. So I'm quite familiar with the region of Durham and local and upper-level government. I believe that for years they've needed a formula for providing appropriate questions and opportunities for public participation in important decision-making events. I know Councillor Mutton has gone out of his way to form a ratepayers association as a way to communicate directly with people at the front line of the community that he tries to represent as a regional councillor. Along with him, Troy Young does the same thing, and he's the elected lower-tier municipal councillor. I think of Jane Rowe and Mary Novak in one of the wards, filling the same role of trying to provide access or availability for the electors to approach them with issues specific to their neighbourhood. I know as well that Jim Schell and others would also be available to hear.

In my riding one of the more pressing issues of the future will be the whole issue of governance. In fact, they have had a referendum in the last four or five years, voting on whether or not to be part of the greater Toronto area. Of course, that's a very controversial area. I might say for the clerks sitting here that Blackstock is a part of my riding that in many respects doesn't see itself as part of Toronto. It's more a rural, smaller community and they don't have the services—the curbs, gutters, sidewalks, municipal transit and in many cases water treatment and other things—that other, more organized parts of my riding, like Whitby and Ajax-Pickering, which are more mature urban areas, have.

So if you were to have a referendum, clearly it would divide itself. If the question was, should we become part of Toronto or the GTA, I could predict with some accuracy that the less urban areas would vote themselves to be disassociated from that area. The argument in Durham region, of course, is always that the more densely populated areas, like Oshawa and Ajax-Pickering, and Courtice to some extent, are actually subsidizing the smaller communities for higher-order services like policing and water treatment, so it is a balance.

I think direct democracy serves a very useful role by allowing people to respond. Their input requires the government to deliver on their commitment. I think the term that's used in the legislation—and I'll read here from my notes the meaning of "binding decision" on a referendum.

1550

At least 50% of electors must vote on the question. In other words, we have to certainly up the participation in municipal elections, because at the moment very few are that high, a 50% participation rate.

The results must be supported by a clear majority. There again, it's the clarity question: What is a majority? In this case it's defined as 50% plus one. In that case, if the majority votes yes, council would have to do everything in its power to implement the results in a timely fashion.

I would also say that it has within its powers today the power to make bylaws affecting those areas over which they have jurisdiction. That's the important subtlety here, to make sure that they're not asking questions about jurisdictional areas where they have no responsibility. It's critical to make sure that we have clarified the question itself that can be on the petition. It's sort of like the federal government's issue of the clarity bill, making sure that the question is clear and that the area they're questioning is related to the jurisdictional authority that falls under the upper- or lower-tier municipality. So that's very important.

Now we've got the participation rate; we've got the 50% plus one. It is within their realm of responsibility to make the decision so that they can move forward.

If no bylaw or resolution is required, council would have to instruct staff to take whatever action is needed to implement the decision. It's very clear. If the majority voted no, council would have to abide by that decision as

well for periods of at least three years. In other words, that question would be resolved for that period of that council, and it could resurrect itself again.

These provisions give voters more say in local matters and make municipal councillors more accountable. So they can't be off talking about changing ward boundaries for the next three years if, after the election, that decision had been decided as no; that ends the debate. If it's decided yes, then they are to go on forthwith with trying to get on with the decision.

Drafting the questions is important too, and others today, I'm sure, will comment on why the province and the Minister of Municipal Affairs will retain the right to have input into the question. It is appropriate because you need a third party group. You might know that municipalities are constitutionally mandated by the province. Under the Constitution, they—ie, the city of Toronto and the other municipal areas in the province—are created by the province. It's absolutely paramount that someone take some responsibility under the laws, the statutes, under the Municipal Act, to make sure that the question indeed covers the area of jurisdiction, is an objective question, and that it's put to the people and there's a requirement to follow up.

The Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act provides that the process for setting and asking a question would begin at least 180 days before voting day. It gives people the time to educate themselves and understand what the issue is. A municipality would have to pass a bylaw to put a question before the voters. The bill would require them to give at least 10 days' notice of the intention to pass such a bylaw and to hold at least one public meeting to consider the matter. These provisions are intended to give voters a chance to be involved upfront in the decisions and the questions to be asked.

Within 15 days of passing the bylaw, the municipality would have to let voters and the province know the exact wording of the question. So 15 days ahead we'd know exactly what we are voting on. A voter who thought the question was poorly worded or biased would then be able to appeal it to the chief electoral officer. The campaign period following the appeal of a question would be a minimum of 60 days.

We clearly have a process outlined that would allow the question itself to be clarified and a process by which it could be appealed. So it's an open process. It's really initiated at the very grassroots. It could be started by one of those constituency groups; a ratepayers' association could initiate the question. With the help of a councillor, they could go through this process of making sure they have drafted a properly worded question in a timely manner.

It's clearly laid out in this particular bill and long overdue, I might say, because more and more people today, through cable television and through other media, e-mail and the Internet, are able to follow municipal debates and municipal issues far closer than they could a few years ago. I would add that people to a large extent are more interested today. They might be busier in their

life and earning their living and raising their families, but I think they are interested.

It has been my sense from responding to telephone calls, even when I was a councillor, that people take an interest, whether it's a bylaw regulating pets or a bylaw regulating noise, noise attenuation plans, and on other issues, such as local rezoning of a commercially used building. We have one in Port Perry now, a commercially used building. They are applying for rezoning and people are genuinely interested.

There is a process now for people to become more engaged. I think that's the future. As people become more educated and more informed, they want to participate. They may not want to participate on every issue, but certainly they have the right.

There are means, electronically and otherwise, to vote today. That's what our municipality is going to propose next time. People who have difficulty getting around, who may not have public transit, can vote. There will be electronic ways to accommodate people to participate, and I'm certain this will apply to the referendum process as we move forward. These are modernizations, as we move into a new century, to allow people to publicly participate in the debate.

I think you always go back and you always say, "What falls within municipal jurisdiction?" It's absolutely critical that we have a grasp of that. For the public today, I think the division of authorities and responsibilities within the Municipal Act is there to be understood.

I can simply describe them. We use terms such as upper-tier municipality, be that a region or a county level of government, and I would say that in that upper tier you usually find higher-order, more expensive costs that are shared among the whole tax base. In the region of Durham, they would include police, water and sewage, and the delivery of social supports and social infrastructure.

They also have, as we've always heard, some duplication between the upper tier, which is the region of Durham, and the lower tier, which is the municipality, be it Scugog, Clarington, Whitby or others I've mentioned. The lower-tier municipality more clearly would have the tax collection function, but there again, if we have a tax collector in eight of the lower-tier municipalities, I question if there isn't some duplication there and I question that in the age of computers and tax rates we don't have a centralized, more efficient organization of collecting the tax.

There is also the clerk, who really maintains the order of council's activities and bylaws. We would also have the fire service, which is a lower-order service. There are those who argue that today it should be an upper-tier service, that we should be looking at combining such services as police, fire and ambulance at the municipal level. I believe those would be appropriate questions for a referendum, whether we should merge fire departments. That's a very important community safety issue, but nonetheless it falls within the responsibility of municipal government. Should we have a fire chief in each of those municipalities or one fire chief and a coordinated service

with overlapping boundary agreements. Those are appropriate lower-order questions that could find their way on to the public ballot, this participatory democracy forum.

Public works, of course, is another area of overlap and some duplication could be sorted out by a referendum process. We know there are regional roads in the area of Durham, or any of the regions in the province, such as York and Toronto, and there are lower-tier roads. Which roads are upper tier and which are lower tier? A person driving in a vehicle probably couldn't sort it out. Sometimes we'll see a snowplow or road maintenance people travelling and crossing each other on the same road, and they'll say, "This is a regional road and this is a local road." Those are areas that could be sorted out in a referendum as well and not affect anyone except within their jurisdiction as to how they organize how they deliver service. I think it's appropriate.

Bylaws could include such things as bylaw enforcement. Bylaw enforcement could easily be attached to the clerk's department. It could be attached, by the way, to police, fire and ambulance. Who is to say? It is all part of providing security and a process in a community. Those are questions that could be decided by local government and regional government in referendums to say, "This is how we're going to organize and deliver services within our area."

I think it's a very empowering piece of legislation from that perspective. Having served for several years at the local level, this is long overdue and it's a format I certainly endorse.

But on issues such as overlap within the province, from what I've said so far we have services that are lower-tier services, and parks and recreation would be included in that and the running of our arenas. As you move up, we've got the fire, the clerks. When we go up to the upper tier, we've got police and water and sewer and clearly the delivery of social support systems.

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One asks oneself, with this governance question that's before us—and I know certainly the member from Carleton-Gloucester has spoken about the four municipal areas, the regional governments that have merged in Hamilton-Wentworth and Ottawa-Carleton. I say to him that this is the very question that the province is giving them the tools to look at: coordination of services within a municipal jurisdiction.

I think—and perhaps on closer explanation of this bill someone might point out to me that it would be impossible—that Ajax and Pickering, two lower-tier municipalities in Durham, have been talking for the last two years about merging. In fact, they have made the decision just recently to merge the delivery of municipal transit. By doing that they are providing better service at less cost. Instead of having two administrators and two different buses and two different schedules and boundary roads that overlap with each other, they have one coordinated service. It's an appropriate question for all of Durham to be asking. I live there. I'm not dictating, as a province, that they mandate that, but municipal transit is an area

where they should be looking at services for all the people, whether they are people with disabilities—Handi-Transit—or people who live in remote areas who have no access to public transit and yet they're paying for it.

I think these questions and the issues that are permitted within this Bill 62 are long overdue, and I certainly endorse them. I've got some notes here on Haldimand-Norfolk, but I think some of the other members may want to dwell on that, because it isn't something that I'm directly involved in.

There is one other thing here with respect to the referendum piece, which is really all I'm addressing in this. I think the member from Ottawa-Gloucester did mention that there are a lot of sections in the bill, which I could outline for you. There are actually four parts to the bill and in those four parts they address everything from town names to functions and different regional acts. I think they will be covered in the debate over the next few days.

When doing a referendum, there will be those for and those against. What they have done under the Municipal Elections Act is outlined appropriate expenditure levels and contribution levels. For instance, let's say there is a group who wants to close a certain facility or merge a certain activity and maybe there's a vested interest. Maybe there's a public sector group that wants to maintain two public works yards, or whatever. They may invest money to win the referendum so they can maintain this duplication. That could be some rich developer wanting to influence the outcome. So we have put in disclosures and limits on the amount of contributions. I think that's a very important part of this whole thing. It may not seem so—it's more technical in nature—but if someone had twice as much money as someone else to spend, arguably they could influence the outcome of any referendum.

The government intends to establish campaign financing rules similar to those under the Municipal Elections Act. The maximum contribution to a campaign for a person, corporation or trade union would be \$750. Anyone who spends money promoting a particular side, other than simply making a campaign contribution, would have to register his campaign and report on campaign expenditures—not more than 50% per electors—and provide financial disclosure. We've got complete disclosure so that there isn't any secret campaign or secret agenda. These rules are intended to ensure that voters can find out who is behind a particular campaign for or against a municipal question. I think the requirement for open, transparent and accountable publicly elected people is long overdue. It's right in here in the language, Mr Speaker, and I'm sure that you're satisfied with that.

The municipality itself would not be able to take part in a campaign or to spend money—so the town couldn't do it—promoting a particular point of view. All it does is facilitate. There's a requirement, as I said earlier, to have public meetings. It can only spend money on required notices as they relate to when and where the votes and the public meetings will be held, and providing a space for those public meetings.

I think Mr Clement, our minister, has listened and responded. I am sure he has spoken with municipal leaders, whether it's the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, or ROMA, the rural association, to allow local governments to make local decisions that best suit their outcomes.

I can't see any reason why this particular section wouldn't be widely endorsed. Even if we talk about the megacity of Toronto, I know enough, after being here five or six years, that I know Toronto's made up of a number of communities. Those communities have common interests. What's most important is that we spend money on the people, not the process.

I think there would be those who would argue that Durham region has provided excellent service at a policing level for all the people and all the residents of Durham. Some would not have been able to support the sophisticated level of policing, for instance, the crime prevention unit or the helicopter unit, if they weren't under the umbrella of a larger, upper-tier government. I could make that argument for many parts of local government, that there are advantages and disadvantages to the decisions we make. Nothing is perfect.

I would say that transit clearly falls under an umbrella of shared service. With expensive buses, whether it's Oshawa's, Pickering's or Ajax's utilities, if they work together we can get more for less. That wouldn't be at the expense of people, it would be to the advantage of people.

I think the whole point here, very simply put, is that this referendum opportunity, this participatory democracy opportunity, is exactly that. It provides a formula and a format for people to be involved in making decisions in their communities. The new way of being a responsible politician would be to listen to those referendums, as this legislation intends, and respond.

It's a new way, as Mr Smitherman would know, of working with your constituent groups, listening to what they're telling you and dropping your own little agenda, just for a little while, and doing what the people want.

As I said, there are eight lower-tier municipalities and I can see that they may have different bylaws in rural areas than in urban areas. Farming activities with their odours and smells, noise and dust don't comfortably coexist with urban life. All these other issues that may be intolerable in an urban area are absolutely tolerable and absolutely required in a rural area.

I can speak to this with confidence and comfort, that it really fills a need at the local and regional levels of government, so that they are able to make decisions, with their people participating. That will serve the greater good of the greater number, and that is the intention of democracy.

I've pretty well run out of arguments. I will take the last two minutes to summarize a couple of things because I wouldn't want to give all of the time away. I know people are interested. There are still five or six people here. There are two Liberals and one NDP.

Part I, point 1, of the explanatory note: "To make by-laws under sections ... of the Municipal Act." Point 4: "To enter into agreements respecting the construction and operations of homes for persons with special needs." Point 5: "To restrict persons from providing services or facilities relating to waste management without the consent of the municipality."

There is a whole section dealing with the cities of Sudbury, Hamilton, Ottawa, Haldimand-Norfolk. There is a whole part dealing with the city amendments acts with respect to the Municipal Act.

Part III is a very technical part of the bill, dealing with the Municipal Elections Act.

"Part IV ... enacts the town of Moosonee Act, 2000. A new town is created and the Moosonee Development Area Board, which it replaces, is dissolved." That one is kind of a vague piece.

I appreciate the opportunity that has been afforded me to speak on this important part of public participation.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell) : On peut voir jusqu'à quel point le gouvernement a procédé à présenter la loi 25 en décembre dernier sans faire des recherches approfondies, sachant qu'on aurait des conséquences au niveau de toutes les municipalités de la province.

Monsieur le Président, lorsqu'on regarde le dépôt de la loi 8, qui a été passée en troisième lecture et qui a reçu la sanction royale en décembre dernier, nous nous apercevons qu'il y avait beaucoup d'erreurs, des erreurs qui affectaient surtout les municipalités comme celle d'Ottawa.

Nous avions toute la chance possible, avec ce projet de loi-là, de corriger les erreurs que nous avons faites. Nous avons remarqué la ville d'Ottawa, qui maintenant sera appelée la cité d'Ottawa, qui est bien mentionnée dans ce projet de loi, mais on a omis de mentionner à nouveau des recommandations qui étaient du rapport de la commission Glen Shortliffe. La commission recommandait hautement que la ville d'Ottawa soit reconnue ville bilingue. Mais encore une fois, nous avons mis ça de côté et nous avons dit, «Bien, c'est la responsabilité du nouveau conseil de prendre la décision.»

Lorsque nous regardons dans ce cas ici, on dit que 50 % de la population doit participer à un référendum. Nous savons hautement qu'avec les fusions des municipalités, de plus en plus il y a moins d'intérêt dans les communautés. Cela veut dire que nous allons avoir une participation au scrutin de novembre prochain beaucoup inférieure à ce que nous avons vu dans le passé.

Monsieur le Président, ce gouvernement, encore une fois, met en place des projets de lois qu'ils ont encore oublié d'étudier de façon approfondie afin de s'assurer que le secteur rural est bien desservi.

Encore une fois, je ne supporte pas ce projet de loi.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I'd like to congratulate the two members from Durham and Carleton-Gloucester for their presentation with

respect to this bill. It was an excellent presentation. I expect that most of the opposition members will be speaking against this legislation, because they spoke generally against referendum legislation when we discussed it in the past. I remember one of the Liberal members literally filibustered one of the committees in her opposition to the whole topic of referendums. As the member from Durham commented, it is responsible for us to listen to our constituents, and there are issues in municipal ridings.

The opposition, I'm sure, will speak against it, even though during the restructuring issues of the city of Toronto there were a number of referendums that came; some were over the telephone, some were a page long, some were a line long. Some of them were very unclear. But the opposition took great delight in supporting many of those referendums, even though I expect we're going to hear member after member from the opposition stand up and oppose those things.

Of course, the purpose of this legislation is to make it clear, to make it clear specifically what the questions are, whether they're questions of planning issues, whether they're questions of restructuring issues, whether they're questions of waste management issues. There are all kinds of jurisdictional issues on which municipalities may seek assistance from their constituents.

There are also areas, of course, as was pointed out, where the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing could place non-binding questions on the municipal ballots if the minister wanted to simply test local opinion.

So I congratulate both members on their presentation to the House.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I thought as part of this bill they might include the two new airplanes the government is buying for the convenience of the Premier and members of the cabinet. I thought that might be part of the bill, because it's announced on a Thursday afternoon, and now the press gallery who are watching this would know; they can't be tricked. But this was announced on a Thursday afternoon before the Easter weekend. Whenever governments announce something late in the afternoon of the last day the Legislature is sitting before a long weekend, in this case a four-day weekend, you know that it's not something they want to have covered. I know the most important thing so far was, "Are you supporting Tom Long?" All the people phoned from all of the television stations way back to headquarters and said: "Never mind anything that happens in the Legislature today. Just ask those ministers if they're supporting Tom Long."

Our people who are here, of course, our press gallery who are here, would no doubt like to ask other questions. They know a good story. For instance, the question on advertising that I asked this afternoon was one worthy of coverage; I know that. Mr Klees thinks it's a very good question, and I've often thought his judgment was quite good until he decided to run for the Alliance.

But I just want everybody to know that the government is buying two new airplanes. Now they're going to

say, "Oh, don't worry, they're for fighting fires" or they're for emergencies or something. Let me tell you what they're for. The Premier doesn't like the present aircraft that belong to the province. They're not modern enough. You get up to 8,000 feet and his feet get cold, when it goes up in the sky. They need something for the comfort and convenience of the Premier and members of the cabinet and senior government officials.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): How many sets of golf clubs?

Mr Bradley: I was wondering if that was in this bill. It obviously is not in this bill. But I think all the people of Ontario should know that they're going to pay for the comfort and convenience of the cabinet. I have the press release.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): As opposed to making a comment, I would like to direct a question to the member who shared the leadoff statement. As he commented himself, a number of the sections of this act are quite technical, dealing with newly formed amalgamated municipal jurisdictions, covering all sorts of things from park regulations to fluoridation of water and a number of other things dealing with surplus management etc.

One of the provisions is an interpretation section indicating that nothing in sections 28 to 32 of the existing municipal acts that are amended by this prevents a collective agreement between those parties from providing for an increase in compensation in respect of all or part of the period beginning December 24, 1999, and ending on a day before an effective date of that collective agreement.

The question I have, and I understand it to be technical—it's unclear to me if this section in and of itself places any prohibitions with respect to any period of time prior to December 24, 1999. The member will know that the recent inside workers strike in the city of Toronto took place largely as a result of the difficulties the parties had in arriving at a collective agreement and the merging of collective agreements after such a massive amalgamation of all the various cities and employees and their employment contracts. I'd like to ask the member if he could inform me of the specific intent of this and how far-reaching it is and whether or not it in and of itself, by its exclusive allowance of a certain thing, in fact creates another prohibition.

The Acting Speaker: Response.

Mr O'Toole: On behalf of the member for Carleton-Gloucester, I can assure you that we'll take note of the question that has been raised by the member for Beaches-East York.

I can also say I thank all the members for participating in this important debate: Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey and St Catharines; St Catharines perhaps a bit spurious, but nonetheless he does use this forum for doing his own messaging.

I would say the best point of view was brought up by the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey. He raised the question that during the huge uproar, I think it

was on Bill 103, the city of Toronto bill, they were making such legitimacy of the rather questionable ballots and referendums that they had during that process. That's the whole issue here, that the public did want to participate and there was no formula for doing that. The referendum process—the members of the NDP caucus as well as the Liberal caucus were holding those up as examples of what the people want. Yet, on closer scrutiny, those referendums were false. I personally have, and still keep them as souvenirs, four ballots for that question. They were thrown around rather spuriously.

This provides a forum and a formula for successful public participation in the democratic process. I commend Minister Clement for bringing this in, bringing clarity to the process. Allowing people to participate in democracy is something each of us should be espousing. There may be sections of this bill where you have questions. I think the member for Beaches-East York has asked an appropriate question and I believe deserves an appropriate answer. But for the most part, as Ontario and the people of Ontario grow and become more involved in their government, they need a formula for participation, and our minister has provided it. On balance, I think you'll agree with this legislation. I expect all parties will support it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Smitherman: I'd like to move unanimous consent to stand down the lead until the return of our party's municipal affairs critic, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

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The Acting Speaker: Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Smitherman: It's a pleasure for me to have a chance on this afternoon to speak before such a high-quality, if not quantity, crowd of legislators and to follow the presentations by two members opposite.

I would like to say that my best wishes go out and echo concerns of those in the community of Carleton-Gloucester for the incident that occurred today. I know that all members would want to offer their best wishes for a quick healing, both for the individuals affected and also for that community.

I would also, in the same spirit of the weekend and the holiday, make a note to thank my staff members, who have been working hard to try to give me some information to speak about today. To Richard Joy, Wendy Ground and Kevin Machida, who continue to labour away in my office, I thank them.

I know that it must be the spirit of Easter that brings people together, because it was mentioned earlier that today three members of the NDP at least had lunch with the Premier. I was at first hurt that I wasn't invited and then realized that next week I'll have my opportunity to play alongside the Premier, and other members of the government, in opposition to that hockey team the federal government will be putting forward.

I found it interesting that I have a chance to follow on the remarks of the member for Durham and at the same time be provided with this news release from my col-

league the member for St Catharines which indicates today that the provincial government, the Mike Harris government, is going to spend almost US\$10 million on airplanes. I thought it interesting and in stark contrast to an item that I addressed earlier this week concerning the Bethesda House shelter for women and abused kids in the member for Durham's riding, which is in great need of some fairly modest operating dollars. It does provide a very interesting highlight to this government's very priorities.

While I had the attention of the member for Durham, I wanted to follow up on some of the comments he made. I found it very interesting that, in seeking to name all of the members, the leaders of municipalities in his community—he went through an exhaustive list of the eight lower-tier municipalities in Durham region and mentioned the mayors and such by name—one of the things that he didn't mention, that he didn't bring to the fore, that he didn't bring to the debate, and I wonder why, was the extent to which this bill, by its very expectation that 50% turnout is a starting point—in his very municipality, the municipality of Clarington, home to my sister, who lives on John Walter Crescent—only 33% of the people in Clarington voted in the last municipal election. That number shouldn't surprise us, but it seems like it must be taken as a surprise to members of the government, because they have set an artificial threshold.

This bill is one that has an artificial threshold. That isn't just a circumstance in Clarington. In Oshawa, the municipality next door, 28.2% of the people voted in the last municipal election. In Ajax, another municipality in Durham, 33% voted. In Pickering, just to keep that trend line going, 37% voted. In Whitby, 33% voted. Do we see a trend here that suggests that the threshold of 50%, which the government has established, is unreasonable? For reasonable people watching at home, the answer to that quite clearly is yes.

The member for Carleton-Gloucester—and I find a great affinity to his riding name, given that Carlton and Gloucester Streets are two very important streets in my own riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale—went through a list of some of the issues that he would expect municipalities might want to consider and talked about things like snow shovelling, arenas, grass-cutting. That's somewhat patronizing and speaks to the instincts of this government in this bill; that is, that they view municipalities and people interested in municipal issues in a very narrow sense. The reality is, of course, if we look at the government's downloading exercise, that increasingly municipal governments are expected to play a role in issues which have historically been the domain of the provincial and even federal governments.

Last Thursday, one week ago today, we were provided excellent evidence of that. I stood in this House and asked a question of the Minister of Transportation. I asked that minister why it was that, as gridlock was gripping the greater Toronto area, the provincial government was unwilling to play a role in funding public transit. Historically, people hear the words "public transit" and

they assume that is a responsibility where the provincial government has played a role. Alas, because of the downloading exercise, this government no longer plays such a role. But one really wonders, with this definition available to the provincial government of declaring provincial interest, whether a question with respect to public transit that might provide a result that was embarrassing to the government would be allowed. I think then the Minister of Transportation would be scrambling about and trying to create a rationale for such a question to be taken off.

The reality of that 50% threshold is very clear. The threshold is designed to reward the apathetic and not in any way to reward those people who go out and vote in our municipal elections. One thing needs to be brought to the fore, and I think that's very clear to everyone except the government, and that is that in the instance where municipal elections occur, in the absence of a very, very strong race for mayor or for the top job, the expectation that a 50% threshold of voter turnout will be achieved is unrealistic. To have this bill hinge so dramatically on that point is to deceive the people of Ontario. This bill is a tease act, and I would say that it is, in that instance, on the issue of the 50% threshold, fundamentally dishonest.

Imagine for a minute, as a community participant, being involved in a referendum campaign, throwing everything that you've got into it, working hard on it as a well-meaning constituent wanting to make, as a citizen, an impact on the future of your municipality, fighting with everything you've got, organizing, using volunteer time, soliciting precious resources from communities to participate in that campaign, and finding that 42% or 43% of the eligible voters in that municipality cast a ballot and having the results of that tossed out, simply because 42% or 43%—a number that I have made up and which, quite frankly, if we look at the average numbers, would be very high—doesn't meet the government's test, this 50% threshold. Imagine for a second that a high-jumping competition was set—not that I'm much of a high-jumper, as you could imagine—and the starting point was the world record. This is the kind of circumstance we've got in Bill 62.

I repeat what I said: I believe that if it's taken and read with any real interest at all, people will find that it is a bill that is fundamentally dishonest.

Perhaps we should seek out other names for this. One of the great joys that people have in taking a look at what this government is up to is not giving face value to the names that it chooses but seeking to adorn their government bills with other names. Perhaps because of the powers that this entrenches in the hands of the government and particularly the Minister of Municipal Affairs, this should be the Centralized Control bill, or the Tony Clement for Emperor bill. One thing is for certain: It could not be called a Clarity bill.

If you were really that concerned about trying to provide an opportunity for residents to be involved in municipal decision-making and to bind municipalities with those decisions, would you really set a threshold that

was, by the simplest research, found, proven, demonstrated to be virtually unattainable? The 50% threshold is fundamentally dishonest.

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This isn't the only flaw in the bill. One begins to wonder whether the intention of this bill is to divert attention away from some of the other aspects; as my colleague from St Catharines likes to refer to it, whether there are hostages in this bill, whether there are sections that are designed to change the nature of other legislation that has previously been passed. We have a hard time trying to understand how the government realistically felt that it was moving forward in a way that would meet with public satisfaction when they set this threshold so artificially high.

I found it interesting that when the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs spoke to this bill with, if not passion then prepared text, he failed to mention that in his former life as the mayor of Cumberland in his last election 29% of the people in that municipality, 29% of the eligible voters in Cumberland, participated in the municipal election. Would the same member stand and say that spoke to a level of apathy within his community? He's one that praises his community, as all of us do, but in fact if we take a quick look at the record—I welcome the member back—the highest number that we could find for voter turnout in Cumberland was 39%. Yet the same member stands in strong defence of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and his bill, Bill 62, and says this is a good thing, that it's got an important role to play in giving Ontarians a role to play in the decision-making and the future of their municipalities. This threshold is fundamentally dishonest.

This isn't just a phenomenon that occurs in Durham region and in eastern Ontario. In fact, if we were to take a look at the last municipal election in Ontario and look at, say, 10, 15, 20 municipalities, so far our research indicates that only two, the city of Toronto, where 51% of the people voted in one of the most hotly contested races you could ever imagine—there were two sitting mayors, both from the two largest municipalities forming this new amalgamated city, in a race that generated extraordinary media coverage and was exceedingly well run, at least from the standpoint of one of those candidates, who chose me as her campaign manager. That was 51%. I'm not talking about the referendum; I'm talking about the voter turnout—a 51% voter turnout in the city of Toronto in the last municipal election. Even with those circumstances contributing to the kind of media attention that generates public interest, we just barely made it across the threshold. The government knew that when they chose this threshold and that's why this is a fundamentally dishonest bill.

We have a long list of municipalities that are affected that way and from time to time I'll give you some other numbers that I think will help to highlight the extent to which the government hopes to hide behind the title of their bill, knowing full well that the chances that it will be put into effect are very rare indeed.

We've also got this power held back by the central authority, in this case the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who bears a striking resemblance, at least in the way that he goes about doing business, to the new Prime Minister of Russia. He's tough and he bucks no criticism and he has maintained a veto. Through this legislation, that minister will determine through declarations of provincial interest whether the issue is appropriate or not for discussion, whether the people in the chosen municipality are to be given the opportunity to cast their view as to whether the issue is important enough. This ability, this power vested in the hands of the Minister of Municipal Affairs is just further evidence of a controlling instinct on the part of this government and that is to ensure that at every turn they have the opportunity to stand in the face of those who would dare to criticize them. This is a government that doesn't like to be criticized.

With respect to an issue, as an example, that is all the rage, I see that the minister and the member from Oak Ridges is here. I can't imagine an issue that is capturing more public attention in York region at the moment, aside maybe from the gridlock which the government is unwilling to address, than the Oak Ridges moraine and the very nature of it from the standpoint of its environmental impact. That important issue that captivates the interest and attention of residents up there is unlikely ever to be the subject of the kind of plebiscite, the kind of referendum that would help to shape the way that a government approaches it. Why is that? Because it's potentially embarrassing to the government and because the government has the capacity through this declaration of provincial interest to simply say, "That's off limits to you down there at the municipal level," in a patronizing kind of head-patting way that we see all too often from this government.

On the one hand, through downloading exercises, they are quite prepared to push more responsibilities on to the municipalities, yet when it comes time for them to be held accountable, to be expected to play a role in the development of those same areas, they choose instead not to.

We've seen this extraordinary centralization of power in the hands of the provincial government. We've seen this over time, not just through bills like this, but through the increasing reliance upon regulation, as an example. This Legislature, the very nature of it in the last few weeks since its return, the absence of government legislation, indicates that because previous omnibus bills they've brought in have provided so much power through regulation to members of the cabinet the very relevance of this place is limited.

There have been two noteworthy examples of issues that have gone to public referendums in the city of Toronto in the last little while. The member for Durham went out of his way to seek to critique the referendum that was done around amalgamation. While one can argue about the process, 76% of people who cast ballots voted against amalgamation. But under this legislation, that kind of an initiative wouldn't have occurred. Instead,

citizens in Toronto will be given the opportunity perhaps to talk about lawn cutting or whether they want their driveways shovelled along with their sidewalks, and the like.

Similarly with respect to casinos, the government has a stated policy—stated, but one might argue, not followed—of allowing a municipality to have a vote on that before any casino is imposed on that community. One wonders really whether this legislation is going to enable that.

I find it interesting as well that when we look at the numbers of municipal turnout in the last election, the community that the very minister who has authored this bill represents—two of the members who serve that community are here today—Brampton falls at the bottom of the list in terms of voter turnout. That is not necessarily to criticize the citizens of Brampton. Perhaps that speaks more to the relationships that go between voters and the municipal elections where there isn't a hotly contested race for mayor. In the last municipal election in Brampton, the turnout was 23.5%, less than half of the threshold necessary for referendums to be binding in this legislation that is before us.

Then it imposes upon municipalities this kind of silence. They've done it with tax bills as well. Municipalities can't seek to explain responsibility for problems with situations created by the province in their tax bills. The city of Toronto has been stopped from doing that. Imagine for a minute the kind of hypocrisy that is involved here. This government opposite spends millions of dollars currently in battle with the federal government over the issue of health care, and that tactic is a distasteful one to many people. But in fact what this government has said is, "It's good enough for us, but municipalities will not have such a chance to be involved in this kind of a debate."

If you accept this bill at face value, I would argue that you are easily deceived. The government didn't intend in any way for this to be practical legislation. It seeks to service their need for rhetoric. But the 50% threshold in particular is designed to ensure that the use of this mechanism is never made possible for the citizens it is rhetorically designed to serve.

1640

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to bring to the Speaker's attention—I'm sure he's heard it before—that there seems to be a declining, substantially deteriorating show of respect in this House for addressing members by where they're from. I've heard from all parties recently, "Mr So-and-so," or "Mrs So-and-so." It seems to be a very prevalent point, Speaker. I'm wondering if that's the new standard, and if it is, then would you inform us of same?

I also wonder if the member from Rosedale Centre would like to reconsider his use of a certain word I heard in the last minute—or is that also acceptable now?—that word being "hypocrisy."

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): He wasn't calling any of the members hypocrites. It may have been in reference to the bill.

All members will know that you should refer to the members in here by their ridings.

Mr Smitherman: On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: I usually go to some effort to make reference to ridings where I can remember the absolute name, and I certainly, in the 20 minutes that I spoke, did not make reference, on a personal basis, to any member by their first or last name.

The Speaker: Members are still getting to learn the ridings, and in fact you got the member's riding wrong; it's Toronto Centre-Rosedale. So we are starting to learn. But all members will know that we do refer to members by their riding and not by their name.

Questions and comments?

Mr Tilson: I'd like to comment on the remarks made by the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

The member has raised a good point of order, although, to be fair, many of us have long riding names. I, for one, have four names and I used to have two names. It took me a while to even learn my own riding. So I hope you are lenient, quite frankly. Not to contradict my friend, but I think it's going to take us a while to learn all the names of our ridings.

I want to deal specifically with the issue which may get to the crunch of the debate with respect to referendums, and that is, as the member has pointed out, for a matter to be binding the result must be supported by a majority of the voters—50% plus one—and there must be a minimum of 50% turnout for the election for that question to become binding. Now, the member has listed off a whole slew of results, which I think are correct. Traditionally around the province, turnout has been low for municipal elections, and I guess that's the perspective, although I don't know what he means by that if he's saying, "Well, you know, if we wish to have referendums you shouldn't have that requirement," whatever the election result is, whatever number of people turn out—50% plus one—as opposed to, "Well, you must be very strict."

These matters that are put forward by municipalities are very serious concerns and we must treat them very seriously. If you don't meet those high standards, then that referendum should not be binding. You can't be flippant about this. You must have strict terms. The members for the government have listed off the requirements for referendums, and they're very strict. I support those strict requirements.

Mr Lalonde: I have to congratulate my colleague from Toronto Centre-Rosedale. He was definitely positive when he said yes, this bill should have another name. But I do recognize why the two members have spoken in favour of this bill. The government has bought two new jets—they're not jets, but airplanes—of approximately \$10 million, but if they want to get on those planes they have to speak in favour of what the Premier is saying at the present time. But there's one thing that we have to

recognize. Once again, I didn't have the chance to speak to that point before.

When I said the Glen Shortliffe report recommends that the city of Ottawa be officially named bilingual, the Ottawa Citizen had a survey in Ottawa. Of the people who responded, 82% said yes, the city of Ottawa should be considered as being a bilingual city, because we know on this planet there are over 50 countries in the world that use French services to all the people across the globe.

I think it's very important that when we're talking of economic development and when we're talking of the national capital region, it has to be a municipality that has people in position who are able to speak in both languages. The way it is, we're not talking of firing or letting anybody go at the present time. Arrangements could be made so that it could be done by attrition, but we have to make sure that we service the public in both official languages in the national capital.

Once again, I don't think this bill will meet the requirement of all the municipalities in Ontario. We will have 510 municipalities as of January 1, 2001.

Mr Bradley: I enjoyed the member's remarks very much. He was on point virtually all the way. I was glad he mentioned that the government this afternoon, late on Thursday afternoon, announced they are purchasing two brand-new aircraft from the United States. That was part of his speech that I must respond to in a very positive way, because we recognize that a lot of interesting news comes on a Thursday afternoon before a four-day weekend for members of the Legislature.

For instance, the "Ontario Realty Corp has been informed by the OPP that they have reviewed the information provided two weeks ago, and the OPP have determined that they will now undertake a formal investigation. In addition, at the request of the auditors and after consultation with the OPP and the Ministry of the Attorney General, the ORC pursued and was granted a civil order to seize information from specific companies and individuals relating to work or transactions with the ORC. These documents are required as part of an ongoing audit."

The member is trying to concentrate his attention this afternoon on the provisions of this bill, and he'd be being distracted, as he mentioned at the beginning of his speech, by the fact that the government is making some embarrassing announcements very late in the afternoon before the Easter long weekend. I know that must perturb him, as do some of the provisions of the bill.

Essentially, what this bill is about is control. This government, which claims to want to support local democracy, is in fact snatching from local municipal councils the opportunity to place on the ballot questions which they deem to be appropriate. It doesn't work both ways. The provincial government can still put questions on the ballot that it deems appropriate—it'll determine what those questions are—but municipalities can't do so without the approval of the provincial government unless they fit certain criteria, unless the wording is acceptable

to Mike Harris and the Conservative government of Ontario. If anything's anti-democratic, that is it.

The Speaker: Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the member for a response.

Mr Smitherman: It was with interest that I heard the member from Dufferin-Peel—I hope I'm doing justice to his riding name. I find it interesting that he suggested this 50% threshold is necessary to make such important issues valid, but is that to say that a mayor who is elected in a contested race, with 43% of the people having voted, is not a valid, duly elected representative? I think not.

The member's very communities fail that test. The town of Caledon—42% turnout in the last municipal election, which topped Orangeville, another prominent municipality in the member's riding, which didn't achieve 40%, and had 39.37%. I think the government has by design developed a bill that is unattainable from the standpoint of actually having binding results, and that makes this piece of legislation fundamentally dishonest. I think government members will know that. The parliamentary assistant to the minister, the member from Carleton-Gloucester, should take that information back to the minister, if he hasn't already made that point, based on the information from Cumberland alone—29%, I think, when he was elected, and a historic high of 39%.

We know he's a fine member. You can use this in your literature. We see him working hard here every day. But when he was elected mayor with 29% of the people voting, was his election then put in question? Was he seen as a lesser mayor because 50% of the people on the voters' list hadn't voted? I think not. I think citizens at home and people looking at this piece of legislation will quickly come to understand that the government doesn't intend for this to be workable.

1650

Ms Lankin: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. I listened carefully to the parliamentary assistant's leadoff presentation. I thought it was particularly interesting that he did take the time to explain some of the concerns that he thought might be raised by others and attempt to give some response. I thank him for that. I think it's a useful addition to the discussion.

I do have to say that his answers to the concerns that he anticipated being raised haven't eliminated those concerns in my mind. I might enumerate some of those for him as we proceed through this discussion. One of the first things I want to indicate, recognizing that the bill deals with a large number areas, is that I probably intend to keep most—I'm sorry. Mr Speaker, could I at this point in time ask for unanimous consent to stand down the lead speech until the critic arrives?

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed. We can do that, then. We'll move on and stand it down until that time.

Ms Lankin: It seems to be a day for forgetting technicalities. I appreciate that. Thank you.

I probably will concentrate most of my remarks this afternoon on the issue of referendums, or, as the government is referring to this, direct democracy. I would like

to begin from a philosophical framework. The member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey spoke to the fact that in his impression most members of the opposition were opposed to referenda as a mechanism. I guess I have to say that he's not entirely wrong. I think there is a place for referenda in the political system, and there is certainly a role for direct democracy and participation by constituents. Whatever we can say in this House about the things we disagree about, those are laudable goals, that all participants in the political process, particularly those who are elected politicians, would agree with, among ourselves. The involvement of citizens in that political process, in the process of democracy, is incredibly important. Whether we're on different sides of an issue, we understand the importance of being able to communicate, being able to get information, being able to represent our constituents and being able to have them involved in the decision-making. Many of our pieces of legislation seek to do that. Many of them allow for participant involvement. Many of them demand public constituent meetings around various issues. I'm thinking of the planning processes that guide municipalities, for example. Much of what was done around the creation of an Environmental Bill of Rights and the roles that have been created there—again, it's about involving the citizenry.

When it comes to referenda, which I see as only one mechanism in direct democracy and in involving people in decision-making around issues, the concern I have at a broad philosophical level is when that is used, or, in my view, misused, to deal with hot-button issues out there, deeply emotional issues that end up being, I guess—I was going to say "watered down"—condensed to simple questions that prohibit an in-depth examination of all the factors that need to be brought to bear. Many times it would take a considerable amount of time and effort to bring that information. While there's an attempt in this bill to direct municipalities to provide sufficient and clear information for people, I'm concerned that that, in and of itself, doesn't go far enough.

I'm anticipating certain kinds of questions that may end up in a referendum situation, but I am very much speaking from a broad philosophical level, and I should bring it down to the nature of this bill and what it does. One of the reasons that I can't get too worked up about this bill is that I don't believe that it actually creates real rights to direct democracy in the way in which the government is promoting the bill does. The name of the act, Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums, is fairly lofty in terms of what it suggests. But the reality behind it, to my way of thinking, actually provides a situation where we are giving more control over what happens in terms of municipal referenda to the provincial government, and in this case in particular to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. So rather than it being a direct democracy or a granting of greater democratic rights to citizens of a municipality, I believe it in fact is taking away leeway that currently exists within municipal governments to involve their citizenry and putting more

power in the hands of a minister of the crown to direct that.

Let me deal specifically with the issue of the role of the minister. The parliamentary assistant did refer to this when he said that one of the concerns he anticipated being raised was that municipalities would not be able to put certain questions on, that this bill would limit what municipalities could do. In fact, it does that. It limits it to things within the jurisdiction of a municipality. I don't disagree with that. In fact, I think many of these limitations recognize the potential problems with a simplistic referenda approach, and so I think many of these limitations are probably very useful limitations. But to suggest that it isn't in a way limiting what a municipality can do or what they can test their citizenry's opinion on, I think is not being completely up front with the public with respect to the impact of this bill.

Taking it a step further, it's not just that the municipality is limited to those things within its jurisdiction; it is the fact that the Minister of Municipal Affairs can at any time declare a provincial interest in a matter. Therefore, that matter, which might rightly fall within the municipal jurisdiction as defined under the municipal act that would be relevant to that particular jurisdiction, even though it might fall within their powers, clearly the minister of the day can declare a provincial interest, thereby elevating it out of the hands of the municipality and their ability to place the question and have a legal, binding referendum.

Again, is that a reasonable limit to place on a referendum? Perhaps. But let's not kid people, then, about what we're doing. In fact, municipalities now have the opportunity; if they want to put a referendum question to the public, they can do that. The question of whether or not it is binding is addressed by this legislation, and I'll get to that in a moment, whether or not that actually offers a real solution or any real rights to the citizenry of a municipality.

But the fact that a matter can be prescribed by the minister as a matter of provincial interest effectively leaves the decision-making and the control over any referendum question that a municipality may wish to place to its citizenry within the hands of the Minister of Municipal Affairs. To my way of thinking, that is not an enhancement to local democracy or local control. It in fact places the control within the hands of the minister of the crown.

If you look to the sections which talk about the binding nature of referenda—again, the parliamentary assistant spoke to this. He outlined that one of the concerns that would be raised would be the level of participation, of turnout, at 50%. I think others have spoken to this, but I must also indicate that it's not that this is an unreasonable limitation. Surely, if you were going to have a participatory vote and something that will be binding on your elected officials to carry out, you would want to have some assurance that the majority of eligible voters at least expressed an opinion. But in the real world in which we live, to suggest that this provision is actually

going to encourage larger voter turnout and therefore will be good for democracy, is a pipe dream.

I think the previous speaker pointed out that in the 1997 city of Toronto election, which was one of the most hotly contested mayoralty races, right in the middle of issues around amalgamation and all of these various things and ballot questions to be considered—he suggested the turnout was just over 50%. I'm not sure if he's talking about for the old city of Toronto. I had believed that the turnout across the whole megacity was about 45.5% or a little over that.

1700

Irrespective, I guess the point is that when you think of the incredible intensity of public opinion and motivation for people to get out and to express an opinion not just on who is going to lead the new megacity into the brave new world but on whether or not there is agreement with the directions of provincial government, I just find it extraordinary to think that giving a legal, binding provision in this legislation is a provision that will be utilized in the real world. Again, I don't think it's an unreasonable limitation that you're placing on it; I just think you should admit that this is not providing some grand new scheme that will be utilized in an effective, meaningful way out in municipalities.

Will they be able to continue to put referenda questions, gauge what the majority of those who turn out to vote feel, and act as they believe is appropriate based on that information? Yes. They can do that now. Nothing has changed, and I don't think a substantial amount will change given those provisions. Again, I'm not objecting to that. I think it just should be admitted, I think it should be acknowledged, that this is a limited, extraordinary-circumstance law, not one that is heralding a brave new world of direct democracy.

There are a couple of other areas that I wonder about. Under this new legislation, the only entities or individuals who can put a question on a ballot are, first of all, municipalities, which is entirely appropriate; secondly, the minister—here comes the provincial control again—can place a question on a municipal ballot. One might wonder why they just don't place it on the provincial ballot rather than messing around down in that area, but the minister can do that. But what is interesting is the question of who cannot. There cannot be a citizen initiative. There is no mechanism for citizens, with some threshold of the number of people who must be involved in petitioning for this, however you want to structure that. There is no citizen-initiated provision here.

Again, I remember the grand plans of the minister who has brought this forward about referenda overall in the province, and he spoke very much in favour of a citizen-initiated referendum. It's interesting that when he has the opportunity to bring forward a bill which he claims to be a bill about direct democracy, the most fundamental aspect of direct democracy, a citizen movement attempting to place a question on the public agenda, is not provided for within this bill. As I said, I can't get too exercised about this.

One of the things about the current government is the great fanfare that's given to a lot of these initiatives, and yet when you look behind, it is pretty shallow in terms of what it actually provides. It's sort of like if you're in drug trials: Some people get the real medication and some people get the placebo. We have taken to calling a lot of the government's legislation "placebo laws," because the way they talk about it, the way they advertise it, the way the minister stands up and punches the air and the Premier punches the air, you're sure that there are incredible new victories here for the common person in the exercise of their democratic rights and participation in municipal politics, and then when you look behind it, you find out that they have given you something to make you feel good but that actually hasn't improved the situation. So the placebo pill is now the placebo bill, and I think that's what we have before us here.

I want to refer to one other section of the bill and perhaps place a question to the parliamentary assistant for his assistance in interpretation. He may know I actually placed a question earlier with respect to the provision of collective bargaining, and I'm sure he will have an opportunity to respond to that. There's another area that I am interested in. It's subsection 34(1) of the bill. Under paragraph 2—this is repealing sections of the act and substituting the following—it indicates, "The election campaign period ends on December 31 in the case of a regular election and 45 days after voting day in the case of a by-election."

I am not absolutely clear in my reading of this and the sections that are repealed, but it appears to me that it may place an even tighter time limitation on the repayment of debt for a candidate who has run and who has incurred some debt in the process of running a campaign. I'm not sure if that's correct and I would ask the parliamentary assistant to respond to that. Quite frankly, one of the things we know as we have seen larger and larger amalgamated municipalities with larger wards in the government's attempt to bring about fewer politicians is that the costs of running in a democratic election are escalating dramatically at the municipal level in a number of large urban municipalities in particular. I suspect, when I think of expenses of travel in some of the large rural wards that people might seek election in, the same might be said, but I'm obviously more familiar with large urban areas. I wonder if the financial barriers become compounded by restrictions in terms of the management of campaign funds and campaign debt.

I'm raising this to explain to the parliamentary assistant why I ask the question. It may be that in fact the section does not do that and then my concerns will be unfounded, but because I may not have an opportunity to give him any more background, I want to explain that. Surely we understand that it becomes onerous, the more money you need to raise to run an effective campaign. These campaigns are not financed by political parties; these are individuals who are running and who are fundraising. If they have had to borrow money in order to mount an effective campaign and the period of time

within which they have to resolve all of those outstanding debts is somehow limited to a greater degree by this legislation, that can become a barrier to making the decision to run in the first place.

I won't prolong it because, as I'm indicating to you, I don't know that that is its effect. It appears, on the face of it, to do that, and that's why I raised it as a concern.

Let me just conclude my remarks by saying that in many ways there is much less to this bill than meets the eye. While the government is trying to sell it as some kind of breakthrough in local democracy, really what I believe it is delivering is more provincial control over a referendum process. For a government that has seen municipality after municipality participate in referendums and express an opinion about the future of their municipality and this government has absolutely ignored the results of those referenda and gone on with its own agenda, it's hard to believe that with the provisions like ministerial declaration of provincial interest, ministerial ability to place the question, the kind of jurisdictional question restrictions that are here, the approval process, the ability of the minister to challenge the nature of the question, the clarity of the question, the chief elections office—with all of those things, it's hard to believe that this government in particular, given their track record, won't use that to manipulate at the local level what may or may not be asked of the local population.

That leaves me less than enthusiastic about the direct democracy portions of this bill and, as I indicated, less than exercised therefore about whether or not this bill will ever provide a meaningful mechanism to people.

The bottom line here is that a municipality is the closest type of government to the local citizenry, a government which already, through structures like community councils and all sorts of local committees, is more in touch with the citizenry than any other level of government. That this provincial government should set out limitations on how they go about conducting ballot question polling of their citizenry, again, runs contrary to what the government claims to be doing in providing some new mechanism of direct democracy.

In finishing, I note that the member for—I am trying, after the admonition, not to use individual names, but all the riding names have changed. The member for Durham indicated that the referendum that took place in the megacity ballot within the various municipalities in the old Metropolitan Toronto, now the new city of Toronto, wouldn't happen again. He talked about having four ballots and how this legislation is so important with respect to that. In fact, there's nothing in this legislation that actually regulates the process of how the balloting takes place. So again, there's a lot of straw men being put up here by the government, both in terms of its claims of what will be accomplished and in terms of the ills that it claims this bill will correct. None of it means very much, unfortunately. If we have the opportunity to see this bill in action, the public will get the real understanding of what placebo legislation, placebo bills mean. This is one if I've ever seen it.

1710

Mr Tilson: I'd like to comment to the remarks made by the member for Beaches-East York. She, as have others before her, particularly in the opposition, has made comments that this legislation, specifically the legislation dealing with referendum directions on questions that are being sent to the electorate, is against democratic principles. One of the arguments she makes, for example, is that one political body, a municipality, decides to have a referendum on something, and she says, "Well, the province shouldn't have that right to say that you can't have that question, because it's not within the jurisdiction of the municipality." She says therefore that's against democratic principles. I say to her the difficulty is that that's one political body, the municipality, and the province is another political body. If it's clearly not within the jurisdiction of the municipality and the municipality wants to raise questions with respect to federal interests or provincial interests, why should the municipality have the right to go to great expense and effort to make political statements on matters that they have absolutely no jurisdiction about?

So I challenge her, as I challenge the comment the comment, "Oh, well, it's too tough, the less than 50% turnout of the electorate, and you must have 50% plus one of those that do turn out." I'll tell you something: If 45% or even 40% of the population in a municipality turn out and vote 85% in favour or against a particular question, then I'll tell you that municipality better take a long hard look at that. It may not be binding, this legislation says under that hypothetical example, but I say they'd better have a good look at it because that municipality's electorate feels very strongly about it.

Mr Bradley: The member would be familiar with the referendums which were held in Toronto last time, and particularly those on gambling questions, the 1997 city of Toronto referendum questions, with a 51% turnout: "Are you in favour of the opening of a casino in Toronto?" No, almost 78%; "Are you in favour of the opening of permanent charity casinos in this city?" No, 66.5%; "Are you in favour of video lottery terminals in the city?" No, 77.8%; "Are you in favour of deferring property tax assessments until the provincial government has released tax impact studies and provided an opportunity for public hearings?" Yes, 83.8%; and "Do you agree that the cost of welfare, social services and social housing should be downloaded by the province on to the property tax bill?" No, 88%.

Despite the fact that there were all kinds of referendums that took place, all kinds of questions, the government ignored virtually everything, and we have now, surprise, surprise—I'll have to ask the member for Beaches-East York, because looking at what appeared to be a quasi-casino, I have to ask her, are there any slot machines at Woodbine at the present time? Somebody told me there were 1,700 slot machines there, yet we had a pretty strong indication from the people of Toronto that they didn't want them. So those must have gone in the

back door. They certainly didn't go in the front door, so they must have gone in the back door.

Of course, I remember when they asked about a uni-city in Toronto, did they want one big city, because they hadn't read Andrew Sancton's book *Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government*. I saw that there seemed to be about 77% against it. The Harris government, which proclaims itself as extremely democratic and grassroots, of course just threw that result out the window and melded Toronto into a uni-city.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I must admit that I've been watching the debate from the confines of my office where I've been trying to—

Mr Bradley: Like the press gallery.

Ms Churley: Like the press gallery. Hello out there. I've been trying to catch up on my paperwork before the Easter weekend. I'd like to wish everybody a happy Easter, happy holiday.

I was just amazed at how calm and reasoned, once again, my friend and colleague from Beaches-East York was: her reasoning and her ability to see some of the good things in the bill and then discuss in a very reasonable way what some of the problems are.

I'm not going to be so reasonable because, although I applaud her for that, I think we're seeing the death of democracy in this province under the Mike Harris government. This thing is pitiful. We went through a referendum here in Toronto and the majority of people said they didn't want a mega-city. They said it loud and clear.

It was my colleague from Beaches-East York who fought really hard, with support from me and others, and got this government to agree to a third—

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Oh, boy, I've got them roused up—to get a third councillor for East York. But we are now seeing the demise of democracy in this province.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Churley: She's getting excited over there, the member from Scarborough.

We hardly have any hearings any more on important bills. The government sometimes tries to get us to agree to accept bills in the House before they're even printed. Then we have to fight to get committee hearings. The bills are rushed through. We see all of these things day after day. We see time allocations on bills. We get bills we don't have time to read properly. The community doesn't have time to read them properly.

This does nothing for democracy. There are some things in it that are good, I suppose, but overall the powers that municipalities need aren't there. It's a joke.

Mr Coburn: I just want to respond to a couple of the queries the member for Beaches-East York raised. I believe one was with respect to the clarification in this bill of collective agreements.

Bill 25 neglected to recognize the time from when the bill was passed on December 24 until January 1, 2001. This Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums

Act recognizes that period and it can be included in negotiated compensation in contracts.

The other item was with respect to accrued expenses after an election period. I believe it's quite clear, and maybe I'll read it so that it can be in the record.

"The election campaign period ends on December 31 in the case of a regular election and 45 days after voting day in the case of a by-election.

"Despite rules 2 and 3, if the candidate has a deficit at the time the election campaign period would otherwise end and the candidate notifies the clerk in writing on or before December 31 in the case of a regular election and 45 days after voting day in the case of a by-election, the campaign period is extended and is deemed to have run continuously from the date of nomination until the earliest of,

"(i) the following June 30 in the case of a regular election and the end of a six-month period following the 45th day after voting day in the case of a by-election,

"(ii) the day he or she is nominated in a subsequent election for an office on the council or local board in respect of which a deficit was incurred, and

"(iii) the day the candidate notifies the clerk in writing that he or she will not accept further contributions."

I hope this clarifies that for the member. Then maybe the member can get as excited as we are and punch the air, and say: "Yes, I really do support this bill. It is for the betterment of democracy and provides more autonomy at the municipal level and accountability for the taxpayer."

We have some fine examples across the province where that has been accomplished.

The Speaker: Responses?

Ms Lankin: Let me say I support the member for Broadview-Greenwood in everything she said about this act. I don't know where this came from over there, guys, but drop it. It's becoming like an epidemic of some kind of a hand motion over there.

I appreciate your attempt to respond to a couple of those questions. I think I'll come to you specifically about the campaign period one, because it still is not clear in terms of what that amended in the existing legislation. It appears to me still to present a greater restriction. We can certainly talk about that. I thank you for attempting to respond.

1720

I say to the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey that in fact the point I was making with respect to the question pertaining to municipal jurisdiction was that that can be overridden at any time by the provincial minister declaring a provincial interest. I think you misunderstood, as opposed to misstated, what point I had put on the record. Let me just clarify that because I don't like there to be misunderstanding among members in this House.

As to the argument he makes that if there isn't a 50% turnout and if it's only a 45% or 48% turnout and the majority express an opinion one way or another on a referendum question, then that municipality better listen

even though it's not legally binding, that happens now. There's nothing that prohibits that now. Again, I'm not saying 50% is an unreasonable limit if you're looking at suggesting that something is going to be legally binding on elected representatives and is going to move away from elected representative democracy to another form. But let's be real: It isn't going to happen in the real world of Ontario municipal politics.

The Speaker: Further debate? The member for Brampton Centre.

Applause.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I wonder sometimes when you go on stage and you start to speak and people begin to applaud. You're always afraid of falling short of the performance.

Interjections.

Mr Spina: Should I pause and wait for all the comments? If you throw fruit, ladies and gentlemen, make sure it's edible. My diet would appreciate it. I'm pleased to speak on this bill on two areas. The first is really the elements that cover cutting government waste and improving efficiency. Just as a quick summary, since 1995, our government has been committed to reducing red tape and trying to eliminate as much government waste as we've been able to do.

On this front, I think we have led by example. We cut the number of politicians here at Queen's Park in this very last election from 130 down to 103. It's the first cut of its kind in the history of this province since 1933. It's commendable that we have now the same number of MPPs representing the people of Ontario at Queen's Park as we have representing the same population in Ottawa. This saves our taxpayers, of course, \$11 million a year.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): We're doing a better job.

Mr Spina: My colleague from Mississauga South says that we are doing a better job than the federal MPs. We would agree with that 100%.

In addition, we have restructured the MPP compensation, eliminating the tax-free allowances and the gold-plated pension plan and instituted a standard corporate practice RRSP program like they have in any other environment. We've reduced the size of the public service, as we committed to do in 1995, by 16,000 people or positions, for a savings of \$650 million a year.

On the issue of direct democracy through the municipal reform act, we talked about the referendum issue, which has been discussed at great length by a number of our people here. The members, particularly from Toronto—I get a real charge out of these people from Toronto who sometimes live in a fishbowl. Put that one in your ear, Mel. If passed, this act would provide a legal framework for the voters to have a say in their local decisions. If they speak loudly enough, the municipal council would be binding and required to listen.

They keep bringing up the issue of the mega-city referendum. Well you know something? That particular referendum was unsanctioned, uncontrolled and inconsistent. It lost all its credibility. It had biased questions.

Let's look at the structure of that. Out of the 17 members of Brampton council, we have 11 wards, five regional councillors and the mayor. The regional councillors are separate from the city councillors. In Mississauga, it's different. The 10 municipal councillors also represent the city at the regional level. Let's look at these numbers in comparison to the population. The population of Mississauga is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 600,000, with 11 people on their council. The population of Brampton is just over 300,000, with 17

members on council. Is that too many? Is that too few? I think this is an opportunity. This bill would certainly go a long way to allowing a regulated, structured opportunity for our citizens to consider the options.

If we were to restructure Peel, do we consider a new city of Peel if one were to go beyond the status quo? There's a problem, if you consider that, because what happens then to the town of Caledon, being fairly widespread, being quite diverse, being a mix of small towns and nodes of urban pockets, and joined all together by masses of farm and agricultural land? Do you run the risk of dividing that up between Orangeville, Brampton, Bolton or perhaps even a chunk to the city of Vaughan? That's really a difficult issue to try to approach.

On the other hand, if you did not have a city of Peel, what would be the other option the citizens could consider? A city of Mississauga, a city of Brampton and perhaps a new city of Orangeville, which could include a chunk of Caledon, and divide that up. Move the boundary lines around. These are all kinds of options which the citizens could in fact consider.

I guess the important thing is that by bringing in this kind of legislation and by allowing the province to have the say and the regulatory environment as to the structure, focus and style of the referendum, it eliminates spurious questions that could be tossed on the ballot willy-nilly. If someone had a bone to pick with anyone, whether it's municipal council, their local aldermen, taxes, dogs dirtying the local park or people not keeping their animals on a leash—any of these kinds of spurious issues could be tossed on a ballot willy-nilly, no control. What you want is regulation, legislation, something that had not existed. We don't need litmus tests to test the winds and see how the population might go—and then again it might not be a majority of the population. It might be an area like Toronto, where 16% of the people actually voted. We'd end up with a boondoggle like the so-called referendum run in Toronto. We'd have people like Sewell running around this province thinking they know better than everybody else.

The reality is that this provides a focused structure for referenda to be considered so the population can have some direct input. The California situation, where there were tax hikes being proposed and the municipality agreed to put it on the ballot—that's the kind of thing we should be allowing to be put, to allow direct democracy, to allow direct votes by the citizens: whether or not their taxes should be increased, whether or not there is a rationale for their taxes to be increased. That's the kind of thing that we as a Mike Harris government are trying to implement: the opportunity for the citizens to have a greater say, just as we do in our caucus.

We talk about the different caucuses of the different governments over the years. Very often, the inner circle of a Premier or a Prime Minister—and particularly we hear this happens in Ottawa, where the Prime Minister has absolute, total control over everyone and no one dare leave the nest. Nunziata had no choice. I applaud John Nunziata for taking the stand he took. But we, rather,

have a lot of information, a lot of opportunity in our caucus, where we have the opportunity to discuss and kick around ideas and massage proposed legislation, and put it through and discuss it. That's the hallmark of the Harris caucus. Mike Harris is inclusive. He is not an exclusive Premier. He includes and values the opinions of his caucus members, he includes and values the input of his cabinet members and he listens when we have the opportunity to tell him what we feel and what our position is.

Was Tony Skarica thrown out of caucus? No. Tony Skarica is still a friend and we wish he were able to be a valued colleague, but we look forward to the opportunity to see another member in the PC caucus in the by-election that's coming up some time, perhaps this year.

This is a good piece of legislation. It's an opportunity for people to have more efficient government and for the public have an opportunity for direct input in their government.

1740

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Smitherman: At the risk of offending—

Hon Mrs Marland: I want to hear Mr Conway.

Mr Smitherman: You've heard Mr Conway so many times. At the risk of offending the member for Brampton Centre, and I certainly don't want to wake the sleeping giant over there, I wanted to—

Interjection.

Mr Smitherman: I've got the conch, Minister.

At the risk of offending them, I wanted to mention that today being the last day before a holiday weekend, we're into a situation where, for any of those people who have witnessed that popular show *The West Wing*, this is the day they talk about throwing out the trash. When there's a tough issue, a lot of media scrutiny likely to come that won't be very favourable to the government, they throw it out with the trash.

That's what they've done today on two accounts. Not only do we learn today that the government has taken all of those savings the member for Brampton Centre got excited about in terms of the reduction of politicians, they've spent that and more, almost \$10 million, on new luxury aircraft to fly the Premier and cabinet ministers, those that are on the pecking order—I'm not sure that applies to the minister who's with us now—about the province. One must wonder how much room there is aboard that aircraft for golf clubs.

Then, if it wasn't enough that we learn about this new \$US10-million expenditure—

Interjection.

Mr Smitherman: What's he chortling about? The member from Oshawa wants to know if there's room for his gun rack. I'm not sure about that.

In addition to the \$US10 million for aircraft, we hear that the Ontario Realty Corp is mired in an investigation that the OPP will be launching. They've taken a look at it, and now after months of insistence on the part of the Liberal opposition, the OPP is in there with a fine-tooth

comb, taking a look at all the problems this government has created with their buddies.

Ms Lankin: I am pleased that the member from Brampton spoke to the section of the bill dealing with Moosonee and Moose Factory. In fact, I think that's one section of the bill that is probably supportable. Our critic will be able to talk to that when he does his leadoff next week, as it's a community with which he's very familiar.

I think it's interesting that the government members who have spoken so far to this bill and talked about the different areas in it have neglected to go into any detail with respect to a couple of provisions, like the removal of the so-called Henry VIII clause. This is a clause that, in enacting amalgamation legislation, the government brought in, which gave the minister the power by regulation to change any law at any time, to do anything they wanted in the back room with a stroke of a pen, no public scrutiny.

What I find interesting about it is that at the time, when challenged, they stood with great pride and provided all sorts of rationale and reasons to defend this clause. It wasn't until people understood the import of it, and in fact the fundamentally anti-democratic nature of it contained here in a bill to provide greater democracy, that the government got backed into a corner and said, in very weak defence, "Well, we don't plan to ever use it." Well, that made the situation worse. I mean, talk about a joke. So people then pushed further—and I guess it shows that the power of the people does work even with this government from time to time—and they made a commitment that they would introduce yet again another bill to correct yet again another problem, like we've seen so often with this government in the way in which they ram through legislation. So now this bill will repeal that clause, and that's a good thing. But the government is not talking about that.

Also removing the provision allowing any 75 people in the municipality to request the restructuring commissioner to be called in—quite an unreasonable provision when you think about it. Now it's being removed. When we pointed it out, they defended it, and here, in a bill to promote direct democracy, they're taking that away from the people. Well done, folks.

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I was hoping this evening to stand up here and join all the members of this House in supporting this bill, because all along members in opposition have indicated to us that they want a more democratic process, a process where people would have a say in what's going on in the communities, and the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, 2000, is exactly in response to those kinds of comments.

For example, during the debate on the mega-city, the members in opposition always attacked the government, saying that there was a referendum, and now we are passing legislation that deals exactly with that kind of thing to indicate to the municipal governments exactly what kind of referendum they can have, because the mega-city referendum by the city of Toronto was mainly

to tell the provincial government what to do, and it's not within the jurisdiction of municipal governments to tell the provincial government what to do. It's the opposite: The provincial governments have jurisdiction. They create the municipal government, and they have the jurisdiction to tell the municipal governments what to do.

This legislation allows municipalities to deal with issues in their area of jurisdiction, and it requires 50% of the voters to participate, and that again goes with direct democracy. Once those 50%-plus voters participate, whatever their decision, it would be binding on the municipal government. I just can't understand why the opposition is not supporting this bill.

Mr Bradley: What I would recommend, and I hope the member has done so, is that he read this book called *Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government*, by Dr Andrew Sancton of the University of Western Ontario. Dr Sancton, by the way, is an expert on local government. He has been at the University of Western Ontario for about 15 years.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I know the member for Niagara Falls will want to read this because they're trying to force Niagara-on-the-Lake, which is in his riding, to be part of one big region, or part of Niagara Falls, and I know that he got elected virtually by the margin he had in Niagara-on-the-Lake. So he would want to support those people in ensuring that it's preserved.

So that's Dr Andrew Sancton of the University of Western Ontario, *Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government*. I recommend everybody read this book, and I hope the member from Brampton has read the book as well.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Spina: I just want to thank the members for Toronto Centre-Rosedale—did I get it right, George?—Beaches-East York, Mississauga East and the honourable member for St Catharines, of course, who always has enlightening information. I will check the book out. Thank you, sir.

The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale goes on about other things rather than what we were talking about. I'm going to address those just for a second, even though my colleague from Durham says to me that if I'm going to hit the ball, I should at least try to stay near the fairway.

1750

You weren't around, sir, in the last term when I was in a crash in one of the old planes that this government was using for the Premier and some cabinet ministers. The reality is, they are 26-year-old aircraft that were a danger to everyone and it's about time they were replaced.

With respect to the ORC investigation, he says this investigation was at the insistence of the Liberal opposition. If you check Hansard, every reply that has come from the Chair of Management Board has been that the investigation was instigated by the Chair of Management Board, the minister himself, far before the Liberals even knew about what was happening.

Thank you, member for Beaches-East York. I think I heard you say—please correct me if I'm wrong—that you might be able to support the referendum portion of the bill if—

Ms Lankin: Moosonee.

Mr Spina: Oh, Moosonee. OK, good.

Interjection: Section 5.

Mr Spina: Section 5. We'll keep that straight for the record. Thank you, member.

I just want to thank them all. Remember that more direct democracy in the form of referendums has been a consistent government commitment since 1995.

The Speaker: It's almost 6 o'clock. Is there further debate? Would the member want to continue? OK, further debate.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I want to say a few things about Bill 62. I think it's a good thing that we're talking about the health of democracy both municipally and provincially. Like my friend from Cumberland, I'm from the eastern part of the province. I've been watching with some interest the debate around the restructuring of the new Ottawa and I must say I've been struck by the powers that have been vested in the transition committee—breathtaking. But nobody seems to much care. There are a few editorial writers at the Ottawa Citizen who care. I understand that in periods of transition there are some extraordinary things a person might want to do. But it is a good and appropriate thing we do, talking about the state of our democracy, because I have to say I am increasingly concerned about the civic culture of our country today. From what I can tell, our politics is increasingly diseased by money and our parliamentary culture is increasingly corrupted by executive power and by the nefarious influence of the lobbyists.

The previous speaker just said what a good thing we did when we rid this place of a bunch of members of the Legislature. A lot of people agree with that. I only make this observation: If you look at the literature, one of the points about which there is a remarkable consensus is the extent to which the Canadian parliamentary system is blighted with overly powerful executives—cabinet—irrespective of the party stripe. What have we done about that? We've done nothing.

There is a recent book published by the University of Toronto Press, the author of which is Donald Savoie. It's called *Governing From The Centre: The Concentration Of Power In Canadian Politics*. It's a look at the state of the government of Canada in the 1990s. All members should read that book because what it basically says—and what it says about Ottawa, let me tell you, is even more applicable to every provincial government in the land. Savoie is not just an academic who is looking at it from the outside. He's a guy who has worked in the Prime Minister's office or the Privy Council office in very recent times. What does Savoie argue and what does he conclude? He basically says this: Thirty years ago, Pierre Trudeau said that the average MP was a nobody 50 feet from Parliament Hill. It was true then; it's even more

from Parliament Hill. It was true then; it's even more true now. But he makes a really interesting point today. In 1999 he would say that 75% to 90% of cabinet ministers are nobodies at the cabinet table, and he produces 400 pages of script with a lot of first-person testimony to make his case.

I would say to the previous speaker and to anybody else, if we have a democratic impulse—and I like to think we all do—what, if anything, do we intend to do about that reality? Lord Hailsham said in Britain 25 years ago in a biting critique of a much more democratic place, Westminster, that what they had was an elected dictatorship. I think that's what we've got. We're going to have all kinds of cute little cures. We're going to plebiscitarian democracy. The only Canadian-born Prime Minister of Great Britain, Andrew Bonar Law, once said: "I am their leader. I must follow them."

We are really going to be a proud, gutsy bunch of plebiscitarians. Of course, who could be opposed to certain referenda at the municipal level? I certainly wouldn't be. We've had some very lively ones in this province on such issues as fluoridation. It brought out the best in my democracy, I always sensed. Who could forget those great debates in Montreal over whether or not you should have fluoridation as a public policy? The talk show crowd loved it because nothing produced a more lurid divide in the community than that kind of debate. The great plebiscite on conscription in 1942—that certainly brought out the best in Canada. We want to have more of those on important subjects. "I am their leader. Therefore I must follow them."

My question is, what are we going to do about the real ills, the real cancers that are eating at hard-fought democratic advances? I've got to tell you, and I don't want to sound like a Cassandra—and I don't mean this as a partisan observation. Savoie's critique is more about a Liberal place. But I'm going to tell you, it's a very generally applicable one. It's not just Savoie. If you read Ned Franks, his most recent, the Parliament of Canada, is a pretty devastating critique of the gap now between the promise of parliamentary government and the real performance, the actuality of it.

I never thought I would live long enough to say that I'm about ready to embrace the congressional system of divided government, but I'm very close. At least under that deeply flawed system, as it has been practised by our American cousins in the congressional system, there is a counterweight to the very considerable authority of the executive branch. Where is the counterweight to executive authority in Canada today, whether you're in Ottawa, Toronto, Quebec City or Edmonton? I can't find it. What I see is not only its absence but its growing power through back channels of big money and lobbyists.

I'll have more to say about this next week.

The Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Tuesday. We wish everyone a happy Easter.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Frances Lankin, Bill Murdoch
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of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 25 April 2000

Mardi 25 avril 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 25 April 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 25 avril 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

WEARING OF GREEN RIBBONS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As you know, this is National Organ Donor Week and we were all given green ribbons to wear during this week. I know without consent it's not proper, so I'm asking for unanimous consent to wear the green organ and tissue donation ribbon for the remainder of the week.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm not sure if we can do it by the week. I guess we can. Is there unanimous consent? It is agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POVERTY IN CAMBRIDGE

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): People in Cambridge want to know why the member for Cambridge isn't fighting for seniors and families in his community.

The Canadian Council on Social Development has released a new report on poverty in Canadian cities. Nearly one fifth of Cambridge households live below the poverty line, with a household poverty rate of 18.3%. The poverty rate for individuals, as opposed to households, was 13.7% in Cambridge. Certain groups in that community tend to be more susceptible to living in poverty. Forty-two percent of women aged 75 and over, 54% of lone-parent families, 28% of recent immigrants, 18% of children five years and younger and 15% of children aged six to 17 lived in poverty in 1995. This should be of no surprise to the Harris government, as these figures confirm earlier findings that the faces of Ontario's poor are the elderly and families—especially families with children.

The report also shows that not only people on social assistance are living below the poverty line. In Cambridge, 14% of those living in poverty worked at least part-time.

Cambridge has not been untouched by the affordable housing crisis. Gloria DeSantis, executive director of the Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries, points out that, "We know there's a huge waiting

list in Cambridge, something like 1,100 people for subsidized housing."

This House hears from the member for Cambridge infrequently. Why is he silent? Why doesn't he care? When will the member stand up and fight for families and seniors in Cambridge?

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): As the member of the provincial Legislature for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, it has been my pleasure to work with hundreds of dedicated volunteers in my riding over the years. These individuals from many walks of life give so generously of their time, skills and energy, and it's fitting that we take time to thank them and to let them know how much we appreciate what they do.

Serving constituents on a day-to-day basis, as we all do, I see many people who are helped by volunteers in their daily lives. As I travel around the riding, geographically the largest in Ontario, I attend many community events and functions that just wouldn't be possible without the help of volunteers.

Recently I walked with thousands of people from Barrie, Bradford and area in the Super Cities Walk for Multiple Sclerosis, I participated in the Score One for the Environment campaign, attended a volunteer appreciation night for our local St John Ambulance organization and went to a fundraising event organized by Ducks Unlimited to preserve wetlands and the natural environment. These are just a few of the events in my riding that rely on volunteers for success year after year.

The volunteer sector helps make our communities work. Our volunteers are the underpinning for many of the services and agencies we take for granted, and I'm aware of that and very appreciative. So I was extremely proud to see 70 outstanding citizens from my riding honoured recently by the government of Ontario at the Ontario volunteer service awards and the Outstanding Achievement Awards for Excellence in Volunteerism in Ontario, among them Kim Pinkas from the Barrie and District Association for People with Special Needs, John Speers from the Barrie Horticultural Society and Phyllis Roach from the Grove Park Home.

I'm extremely proud of the great and caring and compassionate volunteers we have in my riding.

RCAF MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I rise today to speak with great pride of the RCAF Memorial Museum at CFB Trenton in Quinte West. This is the official national museum of the Canadian air force and presents an overview of all air force contributions to our country. The primary focus, however, is on the people who served.

The RCAF Memorial Museum is completely self-sufficient and volunteer-driven. They cannot begin to display all of their artifacts, and are currently expanding their facility.

The centrepiece of the new museum will be a restored Halifax bomber. This plane was rescued from the depths of a Norwegian lake and is currently being restored by over 120 volunteers. I should note that of the 39,000 operations flown by Halifax bombers, 70% were by Canadian aircrews, 10,000 of whom gave their lives. When restored, this will be the only fully functional Halifax bomber in the world.

This museum is a national treasure, of importance to all Canadians. Completion of this project requires financial support totalling \$3 million. I urge all members to join me in any way possible to ensure success in their fundraising endeavour. They truly are fulfilling their motto of "Honouring the past by supporting the future."

LABATT BREWERIES

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): It's a great pleasure to rise today to inform the House that now there are more good things brewing in the great city of London.

Last Thursday I was fortunate enough to be able to celebrate the official launch of a new \$28.5-million bottling line with the good people of Labatt's at their London brewery. The line opening marks the completion of the \$50-million brewery expansion that started last March to meet the growing demand for Labatt Blue and Blue Light in the United States.

At the ceremony were the Honourable Bob Runciman, Bruce Elliot, Labatt Breweries Ontario president, and Don Kitchen, president of Labatt Brewing of North America, who officially opened the line. This line, in full capacity, will put out 900 bottles per minute—that's 40,000 cases per day—making it the most productive refillable bottle packaging line in the world.

The relationship between London and Labatt Breweries goes back over 150 years. It has not only been a major contributor to our city's economy, but has also been a most distinguished, responsible and dedicated corporate citizen of our great city.

Nearly half of the \$50 million invested has been spent on London area contractors. Don Kitchen, president of Labatt Breweries, expects more jobs will be created, approximately 275. Labatt's currently employs 650 Londoners and 1,650 Ontarians.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): It's not an exaggeration to say that we are in the midst of a health care crisis in Thunder Bay and north-western Ontario. The lack of family physicians means that thousands of people are presently without their own doctor, but it is the severe shortage of specialists and staff that is truly undermining health care delivery in our region.

This shortage is so severe that vital CT scans and MRIs are simply not taking place when they should. The lack of anaesthetists has meant that desperately important surgeries are being cancelled. People cannot even get X-rays done because of the shortage of radiologists in Thunder Bay.

While all this is going on, the Ministry of Health makes funding announcements, as they did last week related to genetic screening programs for hereditary cancers, and leaves northwestern Ontario out of the funding loop.

This government needs to understand the gravity of the situation and to recognize that it has reached crisis proportions. With that in mind, I'm calling on the Premier to make time during his trip to Thunder Bay tomorrow to sit down with area physicians so that they can explain to him, face to face, the grim reality of health care in Thunder Bay. It is not often that the Premier visits our region. It is therefore crucial that he use this time in my community to deal with the most pressing issue we are facing in our region. Peoples' lives are increasingly being put at risk as this crisis deepens, and we need the Premier's direct involvement and support.

Fundraising dinners are part of the political process, and I respect that, but quality health care is vital to our survival. Premier, make time tomorrow to deal with this crisis and meet with our area physicians.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have to tell you that I have been hardened with the position Albertans have taken against Klein. In the last couple of weeks you will have heard that 6,000 or so people protested the public funding of private hospitals, and I'll tell you, to have 6,000 people in Alberta protesting something like that speaks to the general activism of the public.

In Nova Scotia, when 858 teachers were about to be fired, thousands and thousands of students and parents and the general public went out to protest those cuts that clearly would have affected the quality of education in Nova Scotia.

1340

Here in Ontario, where \$1 billion has been taken out of the education system, where parents are fundraising until they drop, where teachers have been demoralized unlike ever before, where there is constant government interference, constant instability in the system, cuts by

stealth, government by stealth, fewer teachers teaching more students than ever before, we don't have a similar uprising. I just don't get it.

I am urging the people of Ontario to do what Albertans and Nova Scotians have done and take a bold stand in defence of public education in Ontario. That's what I'm expecting of Ontarians.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I am pleased to inform the Legislature that tomorrow Niagara Falls will host the first day of a three-day conference addressing crime prevention and tourism safety. The focus of the conference is to develop a proactive, comprehensive crime prevention master plan for tourism in Niagara Falls.

Detective Ray Wood, director of the Orange county sheriff's office in Orlando, Florida, will attend as keynote speaker. Also, our very own Solicitor General will be attending the conference and making a luncheon address.

Mr Speaker, as you are aware, crime prevention and safety issues are priority issues for both myself and the Ontario government. In March 1999, I sponsored a Crime Control Commission public meeting in Niagara Falls. The meeting provided an excellent opportunity for my constituents to voice their concerns and offer suggestions regarding safety in their community.

I will be participating at the Niagara Falls Crime Prevention and Tourism Safety Conference and encourage all members to get involved in conferences like this in the future.

I would like to thank Niagara Falls city councillor Carolyn Ioannoni for inviting and allowing myself and Minister Tsubouchi the opportunity to participate at the conference. I commend Mrs Ioannoni and the other organizers involved on the great effort that has been put forward into this event. I am confident that this will be a very constructive and successful conference.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I rise today to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts made by Scott Bremner, a grade 8 student at C.E. Broughton Public School in Whitby. Scott has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair. He has been working tirelessly to raise awareness of the barriers that disabled persons face on a daily basis. Scott has gone as far as challenging the Premier to gain a first-hand perspective of life in a wheelchair and join him to see first hand what it's like.

Scott is a shining example of the potential that persons with disabilities have in this province. Scott is a member of the student council, participates in numerous school activities and is a member of the youth shadow committee for Toronto's 2008 Olympic bid.

Unfortunately, he faces barriers that prevent him from reaching his full potential, barriers that can be removed

with a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act. More than ever, the time has come for the government to provide persons with disabilities a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The problem is that the government just refuses to act. The minister responsible refuses to meet with the ODA Committee and continues to work on her ever elusive action plan. Why is this government dragging its feet when the time is right to introduce this long-awaited legislation?

There are 1.5 million persons in this province who face similar barriers that Scott Bremner faces. They face a daily uphill battle trying to contribute in a meaningful way to society. The government owes them an ODA. I challenge you, Mr Premier, today to take up Scott Bremner's offer and join him for 24 hours in a wheelchair.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): At the end of an Easter weekend, I believe it is a time for reflection, so I rise today to express my thanks and gratitude for having the opportunity to live in a wonderful province and country.

When I read the newspapers, I read about terrible things happening globally: pictures of animal and human hunger and starvation in Ethiopia are flashed on the TV screen or seen in the newspapers; in Zimbabwe, farmers are being beaten and murdered for their beliefs to bring about democratic change; south of the border, protesters are being arrested in civil disobedience.

As in most provinces in Canada, governments still have much more work to do, to hopefully eliminate poverty, crime and social ailments. Ontario is no exception, but working together, void of biases, we can do it if all Ontarians are prepared to make the personal effort. Ontarians are very fortunate to have the expectations we have for our quality lifestyle. We don't have the suffering that is seen elsewhere.

I just want to say today that when I look to other countries, I know I am blessed to live here and I believe we should all take the time to look around us and appreciate what we have and be thankful.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BRIAN'S LAW (MENTAL HEALTH LEGISLATIVE REFORM), 2000

LOI BRIAN DE 2000 SUR LA RÉFORME LÉGISLATIVE CONCERNANT LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Mrs Witmer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act, in memory of Brian Smith, to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 68, Loi à la mémoire de Brian Smith

modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale et la Loi de 1996 sur le consentement aux soins de santé.

1350

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Introduction of bills? The Minister of Labour.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I want to just mention that today in the gallery is Park Lawn school, grades 7 and 8. More importantly, my son is part of Park Lawn school: Kale Stockwell, in the members' gallery. Welcome.

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY), 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (INDUSTRIE DE LA CONSTRUCTION)

Mr Stockwell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 in relation to the construction industry / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui a trait à l'industrie de la construction.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Tuesday, April 25, 2000, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it. Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ORGAN DONATION

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I rise in the House today to speak about an issue that affects every member of this Legislature and every person in our province. This is National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, a week to remind people across Ontario to talk with their families about organ donation, to talk about their wishes, to encourage their friends and their neighbours to do the same thing.

Today I'd like to speak about why organ donation is so important. Each year, hundreds of people in our province are given a chance at a better and a longer life thanks to organ and tissue transplants. Here in Ontario, we have the technology and we have the resources to save even more lives; however, we need more donors.

Our population is aging and our population is growing, and the need for organ and tissue donors is rising. Yet the number of donors in Ontario is still about the same as it was 10 years ago. We can do a lot better and I believe we must do a lot better.

In this year's throne speech, we announced a millennium challenge to everyone in the province. We challenge the people of Ontario to work with us to double Ontario's organ and tissue donation rate by 2005. I've said on a number of occasions that I hope we can do it quicker and we can do even better than that, but we must set a goal. Reaching our goal is lot more though than about numbers; it is about saving lives.

The Premier's Advisory Board on Organ and Tissue Donation was established to help us reach that goal. We asked hockey legend Don Cherry to chair the advisory board. Don knows at first hand how important organ donation is. His son Tim was given a new lease on life when Don's daughter Cindy donated one of her kidneys to her brother. Cindy's selfless act saved her brother's life. It is a lesson and an inspiration to us all.

Yet while this example serves as an inspiration, as a society we must do much better, because for every person in Ontario who receives a donated organ there are five more people who still need transplants—transplants that would mean happier, healthier, better lives, and of course in some cases life itself. We've got a long way to go. But I know that with the help of the people of Ontario and the hard-working members of the advisory board, we will meet our targets and save even more lives. The members of the advisory board are sure we can improve the organ donation rate here in Ontario and so am I.

At this very moment across Ontario there are more than 1,620 people waiting for organ and tissue transplants. For them and for their families this is about getting a second chance—a second chance at life.

I want to recognize the members of the advisory committee, some of whom are with us today. Don Cherry, chair, is not able to be with us. Paul Godfrey, Diane Hebert and Graham Scott are members not with us. Members here in the gallery with us today—and I would ask them to stand up—are Brian Flood, vice-chair; Diane Craig; Marie Kjerulf; Sandra Petzel; and Robert Nesbit.

I am asking all members of this Legislature to lend this life-saving initiative their full support. We know it will take strong leadership to reach our goal, strong leadership in every riding, in every corner, in every jurisdiction of this province. By working together and with the people of our province I know we can do it.

MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I rise in the House to introduce a very important piece of legislation that will mean better treatment for people with serious mental illness and safer communities across our province.

Brian's Law is named for Brian Smith, the Ottawa sportscaster killed in 1995 by a person suffering from severe mental illness. At the inquest into Brian's death, the jury recommended a comprehensive review of Ontario's mental health legislation and the introduction of community-based treatment programs to ensure that people with serious mental illness who pose a danger to themselves or others get the treatment they need. Today we are introducing legislation to fulfill those recommendations, recommendations that have been echoed too many times in too many inquests since 1995.

Brian's widow, Alana Kainz, has been a strong advocate for these changes to Ontario's mental health legislation, changes that will save lives and prevent other tragedies. I am honoured today to have Alana and members of Brian's family with us in the visitors' gallery. I would like to thank Alana for her efforts on behalf of all the people of this province, and I would like to express to her my profound respect and sympathy.

With the introduction of Brian's Law, our government is responding to the strong recommendations of coroners and juries, the expert advice of mental health care professionals, and the voices of many families who have felt helpless in the face of their loved ones' suffering.

Our government is committed to balancing the rights of patients with the safety of our communities, and Brian's Law will help us to fulfill that commitment by making sure that families and health care professionals are able to provide care and treatment to their loved ones and patients. The changes included in this bill enable community treatment orders for people with serious mental illness, and expanded grounds for committal to psychiatric facilities. They facilitate access to treatment by streamlining hearing and appeal rules and removing barriers to mental health care and treatment.

This legislation is critical to the reform of the mental health system. This bill is the culmination of 18 months

of listening to the people of Ontario and experts from around the world, and there will be further discussion during debate and committee hearings.

I would like to acknowledge the work of my parliamentary assistant, Brad Clark, who consulted with people across the province on these changes. His work was informed by Dan Newman's June 1998 report 2000 and Beyond: Strengthening Ontario's Mental Health System, which called for review of Ontario's mental health legislation to support our reform efforts.

I would also like to thank my staff, particularly Lori Turik, and the Ministry of Health staff.

We have received important advice and guidance from many individuals and organizations and we are very honoured to have some of those people here with us today in the visitors' gallery: Mr Ted Fielding and Ms Janice Wiggins, of the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario; Dr Stephen Connell, of the Coalition of Ontario Psychiatrists; Barb LeBlanc, of the Ontario Medical Association; the Honourable Justice Douglas Carruthers; and Ontario's chief coroner, Dr Jim Young. I would also like to recognize at this time the efforts of Mr Richard Patten, the MPP for Ottawa Centre, who has been a strong advocate for these changes to the Mental Health Act.

Today we are responding to all of these voices and to the needs of those individuals who are caught in the storm of serious mental illness. I would also like to acknowledge a family that has suffered a tragic loss and is here with us today to witness the introduction of this important legislation. Lori and Tony Antidormi lost their son, Zachary, in 1997. Again, Zachary was killed by a person who was suffering from serious mental illness. On behalf of all the members of this House, I offer our profound sympathy to the family and assure them that Zachary is in the hearts and minds of all of us today.

For Zachary and for Brian and for all the families and the individuals who have experienced the terrible effects of serious mental illness, we are introducing Brian's Law. Enormous strides have been made in the last century in mental health. Today I can confidently say that we are lighting the way for the new century with this landmark legislation.

1400

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY LABOUR RELATIONS

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I am pleased to have introduced legislation to improve competitiveness, promote stability and encourage economic growth and job creation in Ontario's construction industry. As members know, a healthy and stable construction industry is vital to the Ontario economy. It generates jobs and creates investment. In fact, in Ontario this year we expect to see more than \$26 billion in new industrial, commercial, institutional and residential construction alone. When we add the investments in renovation construction, the figure is sure to double. The measures in

this legislation will help our construction industry continue to grow and thrive beyond these figures.

The Labour Relations Amendment Act (Construction Industry), 2000, is the result of extensive discussion and hard work by both employers and trade unions from the construction industry.

With us today in the House are people who worked very hard and diligently on this piece of legislation. I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce them: Eric Wegler, president of the Greater Toronto Home Builders' Association, and Jim Murphy, Greater Toronto Home Builders' Association; Tony Dionisio, Universal Workers' Union, LIUNA local 183; David Mason, Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario; Alex Lolua, Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario. Welcome. Working together, these key industry representatives have come up with solutions that have been broadly accepted by those in the industry. I want to thank all those who worked with us to make today's legislation a reality.

Our ultimate goal is to have in place fair, balanced and flexible labour relations that facilitate industry-based solutions that will benefit all of the people of Ontario.

The legislation proposes changes that will modernize and improve collective bargaining for construction in both the residential sector and the industrial, commercial and institutional, or ICI, sector.

For ICI the legislation will, if passed, improve the ability of unionized contractors and unionized sub-contractors to compete with non-union firms in all areas of the province. The result would be more competition in bidding for major construction contracts in the industrial, commercial and institutional sector. More competition will lead to greater efficiencies and productivity, and a competitive advantage for Ontario companies.

In residential construction the legislation will, if passed, minimize the risk of consecutive strikes similar to the ones that shut down the new-home-building industry in the Toronto area between May and September of 1998. These consecutive strikes by various trades prevented builders from finishing homes on time. This caused undue hardship and expense for homebuyers, construction workers, employers, manufacturers and suppliers.

The reforms we are proposing have been developed with the broad support of union and management in the residential construction industry and would be in effect for the next round of bargaining which is scheduled to begin in spring 2001. Following that round of bargaining, the new system will be evaluated to see if it would be appropriate for use in succeeding rounds of bargaining. The reforms in this legislation are in the best interests of both unionized workers and unionized employers. The processes will provide employers with the flexibility they need to be competitive.

Given that this legislation was developed in consultation and co-operation with key members of the construction industry, both employers and unions, I urge all members of the Legislature to support this legislation so

that residents of this province can continue to enjoy the benefits of a healthy, competitive construction industry.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Speaker: On behalf of our caucus, I would just like to request unanimous consent, given that there were three major ministerial announcements and we would like to adequately respond, that we move to 10 minutes instead of the usual five minutes for responses to the statements.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Statements? Responses?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I will be responding to Minister Stockwell's announcement.

Liberals on this side of the House believe that labour laws should be like collective agreements: Both sides should leave the table feeling that they've won a balanced settlement. This sense of balance provides for greater competitiveness in the workplace and good labour-management relations. I would hope that as we proceed with the discussion of this bill, that in fact is the end result of your consultation.

Certainly in the quick briefing I had, and I thank the minister for it, there are some concerns that I want to address first during the general debate here at second reading. The government has already committed to one week of public hearings so that we can involve the stakeholders with regard to amendments they may wish to put forward. Then I look for honest and open debate and the acceptance of amendments that we feel, on this side, make sense and are in the best interests of the industry.

I would suggest to you that there are some concerns with the mobility issue, there are some concerns with the naming issue, there are some concerns with the key-person provision that I think need addressing. I'm sure that with the input of the people from both sides of the industry, from the union as well as from the contractors, we can try to establish a greater fairness and a greater balance.

The issue I am so concerned about and always have been is safety. I would like assurances from the minister that he require that there be some types of provisions in there whereby the training and safety process that unions have for so many years been involved in remains intact. The training component and safety component of the construction industry is essential; it is essential that it remain. I look forward to an open, honest debate over the course of the next month and a half.

MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'd like to respond to the Minister of Health's introduction of Brian's Law. I likewise am very pleased to hear that that's the name of the new bill which amends the Mental Health Act. I would also like to acknowledge, on behalf of the official opposition, Alana Kainz, who is a constituent of my riding; also the family of Brian Smith, who are here

today; and also the parents of Zachary Antidormi, who suffered long through that particular experience.

I believe, based on what I've seen—and I'm anxious to read further the legislation—that this will go a long way to perhaps being able to avoid the sorts of situations the families that are present today have experienced. My experience in having introduced the private member's bill for amendments to the Mental Health Act certainly has helped me to gain a great deal of sensitivity to the difficulties and barriers for people who are seriously mentally ill and their ability to get treatment, people, particularly in the revolving-door syndrome, who have had difficulty, have been in and out of hospitals, in some cases over 100 times, and have never been able to adequately get the support they need.

I look forward to reading this bill. I look forward to maintaining my position, as I always have, that this is a non-partisan issue, that this is something we should all be concerned about. I expect that we will have good debate; I expect we will have hearings. I will be anxious to participate in those particular hearings, as will others, and I will be anxious to share some suggestions of others who have various points of view.

Minister, thank you very much for allowing me to accept some of the credit in furthering this along. I hope we will do the very best we can collectively in the interests of people in this province who suffer degrees of mental illness.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I too would like to join with, I'm sure, all members of the Legislative Assembly in urging the people of Ontario to participate in the organ transplant program in this province. The Premier left us with two interesting pieces of information: The first is that there are five people who need transplants for every one person who receives a donated organ and, second, at this moment across Ontario there are more than 1,620 people waiting for organ and tissue transplants. All of us know at least one person who has had a transplant. It is a wonderful gift one family can give to another.

Certainly I urge all the people of Ontario to take whatever steps are necessary—and the information will be available—to allow their organs to be transplanted so that others may live and have a better quality of life.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): First of all to the Premier's announcement, let me assure you that I look forward to co-operating and working with you to help advance this very important issue. You know it is an issue of particular concern to me. I appreciate your words of support and will of course be coming to you when I introduce my private member's bill, looking for that support to be concrete.

It's unfortunate that today the announcement was made along with other important legislative initiatives and that there isn't an opportunity to address it in a fuller manner.

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MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): With respect to the amendments to the Mental Health Act, of course I would like to extend our thoughts and cares to the Smith, Kainz and Antidormi families, who are here today. I also want to say that our hearts go out to all the families of individual family members who have suffered from or are suffering now from mental illness. There are many people who are currently in our communities unable to access the supports and the treatment they need and they want, because of lack of resources. They need to be remembered throughout the course of debate on this as well.

Minister, as you know, many people are extraordinarily interested in participating in discussion on this. The points of view range from those psychiatric survivors who see community treatment orders as, in a sense, forced chemical imprisonment in the community, who believe that if that were to happen, there need to be standards to ensure that the best medication with the least side effects is what is ordered.

We'll be looking to see if there are amendments that can be put in the act that guarantee standards of care and that the treatment orders and the nature of community treatment outside of forced medication—that at the other levels of support, there are standards that are enforceable by the patient as well, that their rights are also brought into the balance here.

You did talk about striking that balance, and I think you will hear from families particularly of patients with schizophrenia how important it is that the family members' problems in accessing support for their loved ones be understood and the ability not just to see the law written correctly but to use the law.

There are those in the community mental health field who would argue that the law as it is written now doesn't constitute a barrier, but family after family will tell you as they try to implement and seek help for their family members that there are barriers in the system. So I appreciate your words in your statement of trying to strike a balance. We will be looking very carefully to see that that balance is there. I believe this will require those kinds of extensive hearings in which we all work together to listen carefully to the people of Ontario and to strike the right balance in terms of rights but also in terms of getting to people the very real services that they require.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Further responses?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Let me also add my condolences and those of all Hamiltonians to the Antidormis, given the tragedy of their loss in 1997. Hamilton is still in shock and recoiling, and I can assure the family that those of us who are from Hamilton, if we don't already have personal reasons to understand this issue, will be paying very particular attention and giving this our very best.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY LABOUR RELATIONS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Let me say to the Minister of Labour that if you didn't know the circumstances of what's happening, you'd think this was some kind of a good-news announcement, that he was responding to something that workers in the labour movement and the construction industry had been asking for and that this was their agreement and acquiescence to benefiting these workers. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The reality is that this government loaded up their political gun with the bullet of removing section 1.4 of the Ontario Labour Relations Act, which if that was done would have the effect of all but eliminating organized labour within the industrial and construction side of our economy. That would take some time, but just take a look at Alberta and what has happened there to the labour movement and their ability to represent their members in terms of wages and benefits, and you will see what would happen here.

I don't for a moment think that this is anything that anybody ought to be rejoicing about when you take that political gun and point it to those labour leaders and say, "Now, either negotiate lower wages and negotiate other changes, or we're going to fire this bullet that will have the effect of eliminating the labour movement."

I see the minister sitting there doing this, but the fact of the matter is that's exactly what took place. It's a question of what's the lesser of the evils here, given that they're dealing with a government like you that would remove 1.4. You wouldn't have any compunction doing it. These labour leaders are doing the best they can, like everyone else, to just survive during the tyranny of the Harris government, and we'll continue to fight the government on labour issues every step of the way.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just ask for unanimous consent of the House to allow the member for Ottawa, Mr Baird, to live up to the bet he made, considering the Leafs thumped the Senators, that he'd have to wear the jersey for one day in the House. I would ask unanimous consent to allow him to do such a thing.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes, unfortunately.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Speaker may have to confiscate that and wear it this evening at the game.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Late last week, Ontario Justice James Farley made a finding regarding activities

at the Ontario Realty Corp. He said, in looking at the evidence, that "there emerges a pattern of fraud."

Premier, you have stood by and done absolutely nothing in the face of concerns that we have raised with you for the past six months. Will you now, in the face of this judicial finding, finally admit that this is a very serious issue and that you have completely failed to protect the interests of Ontario taxpayers?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think certainly everybody knows that this government takes any allegation of wrongdoing very seriously. In fact, the justice's comments confirm that fact and the wisdom of the minister and the new CEO for the Ontario Realty Corp in bringing these allegations some sunshine and calling in an independent audit team to take a look at these allegations. Indeed, the minister, the CEO and the board of the Ontario Realty Corp have done 100% of exactly all the things you would want of a top-notch administration team. I know you'd be proud of that, just as I am.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you continue to give credit to the minister and the CEO in a way that you'd want to give credit to a night watchman for being a sound sleeper. These people have failed to live up to their responsibilities.

Let's listen to exactly what the court documents say. The known frauds—and then they list six—can be identified as follows: In one case, the proposals tendered by three bidders were generated by the same person or persons "such that there was no legitimate competition." In another case, it says, "The six bids for this contract were prepared by the same person or persons, such that there was no legitimate competition for this contract."

Taxpayers are getting ripped off, and you are saying, for all intents and purposes, "I don't care." The buck stops with you, Premier, and with nobody else. We have a judicial finding, we have some court documents that have been filed that contain some very serious statements. Your responsibility today is to stand up, do the right thing and fire this minister. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Harris: There are ongoing investigations. Certainly this minister, the CEO and the board have done exactly what shareholders would want their top management team to do if there was any allegation—not yet proven, by the way—of inappropriate action or behaviour. That's why you have a minister or a management team to do that. As you know, the investigation is going back 15 years. Thank God this minister is finally there to take a look at the kinds of practices that have been going on under your administration and the NDP administration.

Mr McGuinty: It's so obvious that you just don't get it. I highly recommend to you that you review the court documents that have been filed. It talks about six known frauds at the ORC. It talks about fraudulent bidding. It makes reference to fraudulent invoicing. It talks about kickbacks. It concludes with the following: "There is an extremely strong case for conspiracy and fraud at the ORC."

Premier, what else is it going to take for you to stand up and, for the first time in connection with this matter, protect the interests of Ontario taxpayers? They are being ripped off to the tune of millions and millions of dollars, and they are asking, through me to you today, that you begin to take that responsibility by firing this minister. All of this activity took place under his nose and he failed to protect their interests, as you have done as well.

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Hon Mr Harris: Let's be clear, this is not like Patti Starr or allegations of paint jobs or refrigerators. This is in fact an allegation of some wrongdoing that does not involve the minister, that does not involve the CEO of the corporation. It is something that we take very seriously. All your innuendo is absolute garbage and nonsense, and it's not fitting a party so corrupt when they were in government that it was embarrassing to the whole country.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr McGuinty: The next question is for the Premier. It's always fun, though, when Uncle Mike tells a story about the 1980s. It's the 21st century now, Mike, and I'd ask you to carefully take into account the documentation that has been filed in the Ontario High Court of Justice. This is not innuendo, Premier; these are statements filed in this.

The Speaker: Order. Was that the second question? If it is, I apologize for interrupting. I'm sorry, I didn't realize you were into it. Leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, the matter gets worse. Two of the people being sued in this matter, two of the defendants, are highly trusted employees of your ORC. These were people who were working for you. There are allegations in here that this was an inside job. They went to court because they were concerned about the loss of insider documentation. There's a very real fear that these documents will be destroyed. But apparently in Mike Harris's ORC it is business as usual.

Premier, given all of the evidence placed before the court, all of the matters that we've brought to your attention in this Legislature, why don't you stand up today and, at minimum, order that a padlock be placed on the ORC until the mess over there is cleaned up?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member is well aware of the procedures that have been followed, and thank goodness the new CEO and this minister and the board that all of you approved of were in there to bring light to this. They had the audit team called in, and at that point in time you would understand that you don't want me or the minister making any decision there. The protocol for the audit team and then the OPP is that the assistant Deputy Attorney General should review any of those findings and recommend any appropriate action. To date, as you know, new procedures have been put in place to prevent any of these allegations that are being investigated back over the last 15 years—and thank goodness somebody is now standing up, being accountable and trying to fix the problem.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, at first there was a lot of smoke, I'll admit that, when it came to the matter at the

ORC, but now we have a real fire. We have documents filed with an Ontario court. We have a judge making a finding that there is a matter of fraud taking place over at the ORC. What we're asking you today now is to stop going over into a corner and curling up and trying to think of a happy place. We want you to take responsibility for what is happening at the ORC. Your job is to stand up and protect the interests of Ontario taxpayers. To date you have failed to do that and they've been ripped off to the tune of millions and millions of dollars.

Premier, stand up here and now and do two things: First, tell us that you're going to put a padlock on the door at the ORC so that investigation can be completed and we don't lose any more documents, and second, tell us you're going to fire this minister for incompetence.

Hon Mr Harris: If ever there was a party irresponsible with taxpayer dollars, contributing far more than the NDP to an \$11-billion annual deficit, it was the Liberal Party of Ontario. For the Liberal Party of Ontario now to stand up and talk about accountability of taxpayer dollars is really, really stretching the credibility of any of those who remember the disastrous administration of 1985 to 1990. I have to tell you that.

We have taken all the appropriate action. Thank goodness the minister, the chairman of the board and the board are trying to get to the bottom of this. Thank goodness they had the courage to call in an audit team instead of five years of the type of cover-up government that you Liberals provided.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you have been in charge for five years. Taxpayers have been ripped off on your watch. The ORC is presently, as we speak, getting prepared to sell off another \$200 million worth of lands on your watch.

Let's sum up here. We've got a police investigation under way. We've got an internal audit being conducted. We've got court documents which talk about fraud, kickbacks, a conspiracy and an inside job. We have a judge who has already ruled that there is a pattern of fraud here. So you tell me, Premier, why is it in the interests of Ontario taxpayers that you continue to do absolutely nothing while they continue to be ripped off?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me first of all assure the member and the public that not one single person under any suspicion or investigation is involved in any process of the ORC today. That is the first thing that was taken care of and dealt with. Second, new procedures have been put in place. Too bad it didn't happen in 1985 to 1990, when the cover-up Liberals were in office, or in 1990 to 1995, when the cover-up NDP were in office. When we are in office, are things perfect? Of course not. If they were perfect you wouldn't need us. But I'll tell you, this province sure as heck needed a government that was open, transparent, accountable, willing to bring sunshine to the affairs of the province, willing to deal with the messes that we inherited, willing to bring us to a position where next Tuesday the Minister of Finance can finally bring to the taxpayers of this province the first truly balanced budget in over 30 years.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is to the Premier. You keep telling us that your Minister Hodgson and your guy at the ORC, Mr Miele, are cleaning up the operation, but the evidence shows that your minister and your guy at the ORC okayed a mega-ripoff deal with a certain Frank Gabriele in March 1999, and in September of 1999 your guy at the ORC and your Minister Hodgson okayed another deal with Mr Frank Gabriele, this time in Brampton. And court documents now tell us that the ORC was involved in yet other deals with Mr Gabriele concerning alleged price-fixing of environmental cleanups.

Premier, how can your Minister Hodgson and your guy Mr Miele be cleaning up the ORC when they are busy constantly doing deals with the person who is alleged to be corrupting the ORC?

Hon Mr Harris: As we've indicated on a number of occasions, if anything inappropriate has taken place, there is certainly no allegation on the minister, the board, the chair of the ORC or the CEO of the ORC. In fact, they're the ones who brought it to light. Thank goodness we've had an enlightened, new kind of government in Ontario over the last five years.

Mr Hampton: Premier, I think the accurate description is that your minister and your people at the ORC got caught. But it gets better.

Just three months ago, in January of this year, your Minister Hodgson and your guy at the ORC, Tony Miele, had the ORC appealing to the Ontario Municipal Board to get concessions on a property in Aurora for—guess who? Frank Gabriele. And as of March of this year, just a month ago, the partnership between your people at the ORC and Frank Gabriele was described as “very much alive.”

Premier, it comes down to this: Your minister and your guy at the ORC simply can't be cleaning up the Ontario Realty Corp and at the same time be doing deals with the person who is alleged to have corrupted the Ontario Realty Corp. It just doesn't work. If you're truly interested in getting to the bottom of this, then your minister and your guy at the ORC, Tony Miele, have to resign. Will you get to the bottom of this? Will you do the right thing for taxpayers? Have them resign.

Hon Mr Harris: Yes, yes and no.

1430

Mr Hampton: Somehow I don't think people would find the Premier's answer surprising, despite all the evidence. But there are some fundamental differences here, Premier. You now have court documents. Despite all your minister's denials, despite all your government's denials, you now have court documents that admit that fraud took place. What your minister tried to dismiss as innuendo has been shown to be reality now.

Why did your people at the ORC—your minister, your Mr Miele—keep doing deals with Mr Gabriele after other people brought it to the public's attention that there was something wrong? That's the question that has to be

answered. Why did you keep doing these deals when it was obvious there was something wrong? And the people who continue to supervise these deals can't honestly stay in place if the police are doing an investigation. They've got to step aside. If you want to get to the bottom of it, they've got to step aside. Will you do the right thing, insist that they step aside?

Hon Mr Harris: I'll take whatever action the police or the Deputy Attorney General think is appropriate. But to suggest that once there is an allegation or anybody is under investigation, we're still doing business with them, or the ORC is, is just factually incorrect. To suggest by any stretch of the imagination—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Harris: It is correct. It really is not becoming a politician, let alone the leader of a party or a lawyer. And when you look at the lack of accountability, the disgraceful lack of accountability in decision-making, the knee-jerk decisions that led to a loss of 10,000 jobs, that led to massive deficits instead of taking care, making sure you get the facts before you do the right thing—the public and the people of Ontario wanted a government to take the time, get the facts, make the right decision, be open and honest and upfront with the public. Thank God they got a government that does that now, after 10 years of disgraceful government in this province.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: My question is for the Premier. Premier, I would simply say to you that the same people who have been doing deals with Mr Gabriele can't stay there now while the police are investigating. I think that's a matter of common sense.

POVERTY AMONG SENIORS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Premier, I want to ask you about the Easter weekend. A study, released on Easter weekend, on food bank use in the greater Toronto area shows that since you became Premier in 1995, the percentage of seniors forced to use food banks has doubled, the number of people who need to use food banks went up, and after food bank users pay their rent, the amount of money they have left plunged by 33%; they're now living on a paltry \$4.95 a day.

Premier, you can do something about this. You could bring back rent controls and you could raise the minimum wage so that people have some money to pay for food. Would you do that, Premier?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I don't know who did the study. I do recall somebody indicating—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Harris: I'm sorry. Who did the study?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): The Canadian Council on Social Development.

Hon Mr Harris: Oh, the Canadian Council on Social Development. I think the little article I read indicated that they attributed taking away rent controls, when of course

you know rent controls have not been taken for any person, any senior, any welfare recipient—any individual in this province has not lost rent controls. In fact, the increase for rent this year under the rent control legislation that you brought in is the lowest in the history of the province.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): Premier, I was shocked to read that there are twice as many seniors now relying on food banks, and I actually hope you were too when you read that, despite your little tirade there.

I want to tell you about one senior who called us, Kenneth Hardy. He had only \$1.50 left in his bank account by Good Friday. His Easter dinner consisted of a small meat pie, a small dented can of potatoes which he bought from the damaged goods bin and a small dented can of peas which he had been saving since Christmas for a special occasion. He is a senior living on a meagre income in the GTA, and he had to wait until this week to receive his pension cheque that your government could have delivered to all seniors before the holiday weekend. He didn't call on his own behalf. He actually called because he was worried about some of his friends who didn't have enough money left to buy a small chocolate bunny for their grandchildren.

You obviously aren't going to agree with us on rent controls. You obviously aren't going to agree with us on the minimum wage. Here is a small thing you could do that would help some seniors a little bit in these dire circumstances: Will you guarantee that all seniors will receive their Ontario government pension cheques before holiday weekends, when they can spend the time with their family, when they have access to their own resources, and not have to spend a lonely weekend like Kenneth Hardy did this weekend?

Hon Mr Harris: It's not a bad suggestion. It's something we will take under advisement. If it's feasible to do, we would be happy to look at it.

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. I want to ask you a question on behalf of Ontario parents in the wake of the tragedy that occurred in my community late last week. Parents in particular want to know what we are doing here in Ontario to prevent violence in our schools.

Premier, you may know that after the tragic incident in Alberta last year, the government there set up a task force. Its report, entitled *Start Young—Start Now!*, made several recommendations on how to prevent these kinds of incidents from taking place. Those recommendations included expanded mental health services for children and youth, crisis response plans for all the schools and a province-wide emergency line for families who find themselves in crisis.

Why doesn't Ontario draft a plan to prevent violence in Ontario schools?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): No government has taken more action and sought unanimous support, and been opposed by the Liberal Party at every turn, for actions to bring respect, to bring responsibility, to bring accountability into our schools, than ours. At every step of the way, when either I or the Minister of Education has proposed areas that we believe can be strengthened, you ridicule it, you ignore it, you seem to be opposed to it. We've talked ad infinitum about measures on weapons and guns with the federal government, on tightening up the Young Offenders Act. You opposed changes to the Young Offenders Act.

If this is the new change, if you now believe that individuals have to be accountable, that there needs to be responsibility, if this is a 100% reversal on the part of the leader of this Liberal Party, I want to tell you, I welcome it and I would be happy to work with you—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Premier take his seat, please. Member from Hamilton East. Order. Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, I have four children in Ottawa schools today: three in high school, one in grade 8. As far as I'm concerned, I spend far too much time away from them. If some harm should come to any of my children, I would expect that the person responsible would be punished. But what Terri and I really want to know, and I think what Ontario parents want to know, is: Are we doing everything we can today in Ontario to prevent violence from occurring in the first place? Why could we not draw on the experience in other jurisdictions to put in place a plan, not to punish offenders after they've committed the offences, but to prevent the offences from occurring in the first place? So I ask you, Premier, to set aside the rhetoric, and I ask you, on behalf of Ontario parents, to consider a plan to prevent violence from occurring in the first place in Ontario schools.

Hon Mr Harris: With the greatest of respect, this is a very serious issue. Many of us are parents. Like you, I have two young children in the school system. But it is very difficult for me, when you have opposed every initiative by this minister, every initiative by the Attorney General, every initiative by the Solicitor General, every initiative by the Minister of Education, to bring respect and responsibility into the schools. You have opposed all the initiatives we have proposed. I assume the only reason you have changed your mind is that the polls have told you to change your mind, because you never act out of principle, you never act out of—

Interjections.

1440

The Speaker: Order. Premier take his seat, please. I couldn't hear the Premier. Is the Premier finished now? There is 30 seconds left.

Hon Mr Harris: I just wanted to conclude by saying that if this was a 180-degree change of opposition to every initiative that we have tried to take with school boards, that we've tried to take with teachers, that we've

tried to take in response, that you have fought and you have opposed every step of the way, we welcome—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Please take your seat. Member for Windsor West, come to order, please. We can't have it when you shout.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Because I was calling people to order, that's why, member for Hamilton East, and it was you I was calling to order. It's hard to keep track when I'm trying to call people to order as well, with all due respect.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): My question is for the Minister of Correctional Services. Although I wasn't a member of this government in 1997, I am aware that your predecessor announced sites for new correctional facilities. In fact, on October 9, 1997, the then Ontario Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services, Mr Bob Runciman, announced that the province's two new adult correctional facilities would be located near the town of Penetanguishene and the town of Lindsay. Lately, local media and politicians have stated on several occasions that the town of Penetanguishene was promised that the prison would be publicly run. In fact, some residents of Penetanguishene have accused you and this government of lying to them about who would operate the facility in Penetanguishene. The residents have told you that your predecessor told them it would be a publicly operated facility.

Minister, did your predecessor commit to who would operate the facility at Penetanguishene?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I'm very happy to answer the honourable member's question to clarify the misinformation that has been bandied about not only in this House but outside of this House. I have talked at length with the previous minister of corrections, and he has assured me that he did not commit that the Penetanguishene jail would be publicly or privately run. In fact, the town of Penetanguishene was fully aware in December 1997 that it could be operated by a private operator. They wrote the then Honourable Robert Runciman in December 1997 and said, "In conclusion, Mr Minister, council and I don't envy the decision you have to make to determine which facility will be privately run or if either will be privately run." This is their letter. "All we ask is that you take into consideration all the available information before making a decision, and thank you for your consideration." That was their letter to the minister.

I should say as well that there was a newspaper article in February 1998 where the minister said that it was part of his obligation to Ontario taxpayers to explore—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Coburn: The correspondence you're referring to was not a public announcement, and the media continues to attack you and this government that your predecessor

confirmed to them that this government decided against letting the private sector run a new superjail. I have a clipping dated October 27, 1998, and the headline reads, "New Superjail Won't Be in Private Hands—Runciman."

Minister, again I ask: Did your predecessor commit to the town of Penetanguishene who would operate the facility in their municipality?

Hon Mr Sampson: I thank the honourable member, who I know has a very keen interest in the reform we're bringing to Ontario corrections because he of course has one of our larger institutions in his neighbourhood. I understand his concern. Of course, in that very same article the minister says that it's part of the obligation to Ontario taxpayers to explore and establish cost-reduction strategies at all levels of the organization and that the ministry is exploring the possibility of private sector involvement in one of its new facilities.

I say to the member who raised the question and to the members opposite who are heckling, it is quite clear that our obligation to our taxpayers is to run an effective and efficient correctional system, one that delivers results at a fair dollar to the taxpayer. I know from the heckling opposite from the Liberal benches that both of those are terribly difficult issues for you to grasp, but they're ones that I'm grappling with now and trying to deliver on.

GOVERNMENT PLANES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Premier. I want to ask you about your purchase of two luxury jets for over \$11 million last weekend. You claimed that the two other planes were useless when you traded them in for over \$2 million. Clearly, we have a province where you believe in economy class education, economy class health care, but only the best of luxury for you and your ministers.

Premier, not only did you spend over \$11 million of taxpayers' dollars on two new jets, you also used and purchased from an American company. Of course, there are no companies in Canada that are available to do that type of work and to provide those purchases here. Can you explain? In view of the situation we have in health care in this province, in view of the fact that we're sending pregnant moms from Toronto to Ottawa to give birth because we don't have any space, in view of the fact that police cannot get helicopters, in view of all this, how can you justify spending over \$11 million of taxpayers' money to purchase two new jets so you and your cabinet can travel in first class?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the member knows that the aircraft are very similar to the aircraft that were 20 and 21 or 21 and 22 years old, that were down for close to a third of the time, aircraft that are used, yes, for myself and cabinet, senior government officials and for a number of staff during the firefighting season and other activities of the Minister of Natural Resources as well as the Lieutenant Governor. I think the member knows they're not jet aircraft. I guess that like everything else, they think if they say the misinformation

often enough somebody might believe the crap that they put out. The fact of the matter is that these are very similar aircraft to the old ones that we are replacing. They had been recommended for replacement under your administration, but you decided to fritter away billions of dollars on other things—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Premier's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Agostino: The reality is that the Ministry of Natural Resources has plenty of jets that can be used by the Premier and by his cabinet on a daily basis.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Brampton Centre, come to order. Order. If we could put 10 seconds back on the clock, please.

Mr Agostino: Again, clearly, the Ministry of Natural Resources has plenty of jets and helicopters and other equipment that can be used to jet the cabinet and the Premier and senior civil servants around the province. The reality is that in the press release it talks about using the—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member, take a seat. Stop the clock. The member for Brampton Centre, this is his last warning. We can't have you shouting across. It's his last warning, the member for Brampton Centre. Start the clock.

Mr Agostino: The Premier talks about firefighting and using it for other purposes outside of travel by ministers in his cabinet. The reality is that this is not a plane for fighting fires; this is a plane that is white, leather interior, comfortably seats nine, has a hot food preparation area, has a bar service inside and has plenty of storage room. This is a luxury government jet. Call it as it is, Premier. This is not to fight fires in northern Ontario; this is to get you and your cabinet comfortably around this province.

Again, Premier, you have not explained how you can justify over \$11 million in taxpayers' expense and how you can justify purchasing these from an American—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member, take a seat. We won't continue. I can't hear. His own members are shouting. I can't even hear past them. I'll give the member 10 seconds to wrap up, please.

Mr Agostino: Premier, can you explain how this jet with white leather interior, hot food preparation area, bar service, that seats nine is going to be used to fight fires across Ontario?

Hon Mr Harris: The new aircraft, which have been called the safest turboprop aircraft in the air today, the King Air 350s, replaced the two King Airs that my predecessor, Bill Davis, going back over a period of time, and the Liberals and the NDP flew around in. In 1983, they were recommended for replacement, because they were getting too old and inefficient. In 1987, they were recommended for replacement. In 1989, they were recommended for replacement. Unfortunately, the

governments of the day frittered away so much money they couldn't even provide safe aircraft for the Lieutenant Governor and those officials who need them. In 1998, they were recommended again. So, thank goodness, now we have the kind of government that's brought accountability and responsibility that we can afford safe aircraft—

The Speaker: The Premier's time is up.

1450

NURSE PRACTITIONERS

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): In my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, we're more interested in health care than airplanes right now, so my question is directed to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

As you are well aware, our government has been instrumental in promoting and developing primary health care services provided by nurse practitioners for a number of years. Recently I had the opportunity to read the Registered Nurse Journal, March-April 2000 issue. There's an article entitled "Nurse Practitioner Graduates: Where Are They Now?" If I may quote from article, it says, "The percentage of graduates working as nurse practitioners one year and three years following graduation was 58% and 60%."

Minister, in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, many people have difficulty accessing quality primary health care. Can you tell my constituents why, after three years, only 60% of these highly trained nurse practitioners are working?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Yes. The survey to which the member refers was actually done prior to the announcement that the Premier and I made in February of this year. At that time, we were pleased to announce that an additional 106 new nurse practitioners would be serving people in Ontario. I'm very pleased to say that, for the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, this now means that in his community there will be six additional nurse practitioners.

Mr Beaubien: Minister, on behalf of the constituents of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, we certainly thank the ministry for the nurse practitioners that we received in the last round of allocations. However, what are the ministry's future plans with regard to dealing with these highly trained individuals so that, instead of having 60% of them working, we would have 100% of them working?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I indicated, the survey showing the 60% was done prior to the most recent announcement with the addition of 106 nurse practitioners. I'm very pleased to say that in Ontario we presently are supporting approximately 226 nurse practitioners. Those nurse practitioners are working in primary care reform pilot projects, they are working in the long-term-care facilities, they are working in the aboriginal health centres and they are working in underserved areas.

Just as we originally supported about 120 nurse practitioners, more recently 106, I can assure you that we will be making future announcements that will increase the number of nurse practitioners. We look forward to them working co-operatively with physicians throughout Ontario.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): To the Premier: Holiday weekends should be a time of peace, catching up with our friends and families, enjoying the outdoors, taking it easy. But at least for four families in the city of Toronto, the weekend brought sorrow and pain and fear. That fear has seeped out to touch the lives of everyone living in this city, from Scarborough to North York to Etobicoke: Hani Othman, 16 years old, shot dead; Sheldon Bailey, 18 years old, shot dead; a 13-year-old boy shot and nearly killed; a 26-year-old man shot and in hospital. Since April 15, there have been eight other shootings in the Toronto area. Premier, will you tell the concerned people of this city why you refuse to take a stand in favour of gun control? Who are you listening to, an American gun lobby or the people of Ontario?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Mr Speaker, I have to tell you the member is sadly misinformed or mistaken or intentionally saying some things that just aren't true.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'd ask the Premier to withdraw that. You can't say that somebody is intentionally—if you would withdraw that, please.

Hon Mr Harris: I withdraw.

Mr Speaker, let me say that no government has taken a stronger stand on violence with guns, on crime, on guns and on trying to control illegal guns and even legal guns that are used illegally. If you are referring to the over \$200 million wasted by the federal government on legal hunting guns and sporting guns, which is obviously not doing the job—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Windsor West, this is her last warning. We can't have you shouting across.

Premier, continue.

Hon Mr Harris: If you are referring to our opposition to that boondoggle of a disaster that has wasted hundreds of millions of dollars, that the Liberals support and apparently you support—I don't know why—dollars that could have been used to fight the illegal use of guns, to fight legal guns that are used illegally, to have tougher penalties for crime, which you always oppose when we bring it up—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the Premier's time is up. Supplementary.

Ms Churley: Premier, as you well know, your candidate in the upcoming by-election disagrees with you on that, as do many other people who are concerned about the proliferation of guns. Let's set the record straight

here, Premier: You have spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars to fight these laws that restrict guns. There hasn't been a provincial gun amnesty in Ontario since 1994. Members of your own caucus are appearing on US National Rifle Association television ads. You allow the NRA information on how to load and handle handguns into our schools. You are still 118 police officers short of the policing level that existed under the NDP government. Your idea of safe streets legislation is to ban squeegee kids.

Premier, this is ludicrous. You've got to take this seriously. The people of Toronto, indeed of all of Ontario, want answers. You're taking us in the wrong direction, as I've just outlined. When are you going to do something positive to stop the proliferation of guns in the city of Toronto to save these young people's lives?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the first thing that's important is that the public have the facts, something they're not getting from your question. Second, you talk about the number of police officers, where there are more police officers on the street today and going on the street today than there were under your administration. You know we invested \$150 million to put another 1,000 net new front-line police officers on to our streets. If you ask the police this, if you ask any police officer, "Would you rather have the \$350 million the federal Liberals are wasting on a boondoggle of a large bureaucracy, ostensibly for gun control, or would you rather have 2,300 new front-line police officers, as we're advocating?" every single police officer would say, "Give us that \$350 million for more front-line police officers like the Ontario government is giving us."

SALE OF SCHOOLS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. I want to ask you about the connection between the sale of schools in this province and the Ontario Realty Corp and the policies, or the lack of policies, of your ministry. You may be aware that Torrance school in Guelph was put up for an RFP in March; 13 days later the RFP ended and it was sold at an emergency board meeting called immediately afterwards. You may be aware that it sold for \$175,000, and hopefully you're aware, Minister, that at the same time in December the year before the city of Guelph had assessed this property at \$500,000. That's three times as much as what the property sold for.

I want to ask you today the circumstances at Torrance school released by the Ontario Realty Corp to the Upper Grand board: Are you in a position today to assure us that that has been investigated, that there was no wrongdoing in this kind of process that saw that property released for one third its value, that there are policies in place that are protecting the public interest in what apparently is a terrible deal for the people of Guelph, for the people of Ontario? Minister, can you stand in your place and tell us today that that's the case?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): As the member well knows, the decision about selling surplus properties that school boards may own—they make the decision about how they want to sell them. If he says that this particular school board messed up in this and that they can't be trusted and they need to be investigated, I'll let them know that is the honourable member's view. As I understand it, there are several trustees who are going to call for an investigation of this, they will debate that in a public meeting, and I would suggest that he await the decision of those duly elected trustees. It is their responsibility to make that decision. I would be quite surprised if the school board would share the view of their handling of this that the honourable member has just characterized.

1500

Mr Kennedy: As my leader amply indicated earlier, the Ontario Realty Corp is under investigation. You should by now be aware of whatever the Ontario Realty Corp is doing with the dozens of properties that have been given to it by the school boards. In this case, the Ontario Realty Corp had to release Torrance school in order for it to be sold, and it ended up being sold under these circumstances.

Minister, there's 133 schools all around the province. Have you set policy to make sure that the public interest is observed here? Right now there are 133 other schools that could potentially be sold and end up in the same situation as the Torrance school in Guelph. What people want to hear from you is that you're not just passing the buck, that you're going to take some responsibility for making sure the community interest is going to be served. You've insulted the people of Guelph by making them close their school. Will you at least make sure that there's fair value obtained for it and for all of the schools that are up for sale?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Elected trustees in this community have made a decision, or potentially are making a decision, about what they want to do with the surplus school space. If the honourable member is questioning their integrity on how well they've done this, that is one thing, but these trustees have the responsibility for doing this. They are debating whether they want to have further work or investigation or whatever in this deal. If they wish the assistance of the ministry, they can certainly have the assistance of the ministry.

If the honourable member has evidence that school boards and school board trustees are doing something unethical in the disposal of surplus schools that they may have that are excess to their need, he should put that forward, and if that evidence exists we will certainly be prepared to issue new directives to school boards to fix the problem. At the moment, this particular school board is looking at this issue and we will await the decision of those trustees.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Despite the valuable efforts over the years of groups like Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving and the Ontario Provincial Police, to name just a few, drinking and driving persists as a dangerous problem in this province. In fact, statistics suggest that approximately 25% of all those killed in Ontario roads die in drinking-and-driving collisions. Minister, can you tell me what the government is doing to address the problem of drinking and driving in Ontario?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): Since we became the government we have taken very tough action on this very serious issue to reduce the problem of drinking and driving in Ontario. Administrative driver's licence suspensions, which were introduced in November 1996, to date have resulted in 63,000 people who've lost their licence for 90 days. Remedial measures require assessment plus education or treatment as a pre-condition to licence reinstatement. Increased suspension periods are now three years for the second offence and lifetime for the third offence. The vehicle impoundment program for those drivers who are suspended due to Criminal Code convictions is working very well. We have dedicated a multi-year fund to the RIDE program of \$1.2 million annually.

Mr Tascona: It is certainly gratifying to hear that this government recognizes the problem that drinking and driving continues to pose in Ontario. I also know that the residents of my riding will find it reassuring to learn of the tough action your ministry has taken to combat it. Can you tell me, Minister, what effect these measures have had in helping to reducing the problem of drinking and driving in Ontario?

Hon Mr Turnbull: We know that our tough action against drinking drivers is working. The 1997 statistics show that drinking fatalities have decreased by one third from three years earlier. We will continue to crack down. Although we have made progress, there is much more work to do on this very important issue. We've proven our commitment to safety: We now have the fourth-safest roads in North America with the lowest fatalities since 1950, but we must all work together to stop this scourge of drinking and driving.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, you will know that the amalgamation in the Ottawa-Carleton area of both the separate boards and the public boards has created a very, very unusual situation in that both boards now span the rural areas, the suburban area, the city and the city core. What this means is that when you take your formula of space, before a board can ask for space for its growth area it has to close down and have 100% usage in

the rest of its area, which means you pit the suburbs against the core part of the city and some of those very fragile neighbourhoods.

In my riding alone we're potentially facing closure of about 20 schools. That means what you're going to see is what I call "demographic cleansing," because families with children will not want to move there when the schools are gone and those families with children will want to move out to where the schools will be. This is causing incredible tension and social disruption in the Ottawa area.

Minister, will you commit yourself to a moratorium or a freeze until you've had a chance to consult on the impact of school closures in the Ottawa-Carleton area and take some action today?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I've met with both boards. I've also met and discussed this with our Ottawa MPPs in this caucus. We have made some changes in the rules to make their resources a little more flexible to assist. We also, as you know, topped up money for boards on the accommodation. We've asked school boards to submit long-range capital plans to the ministry. As you know, we are asking them to take a look at their enrolment and their needs, and to do capital plans based on that. We are going to be taking those plans and seeing if we need to make changes in how we fund boards for this or the rules around how that money flows to boards for new pupil places.

Mr Patten: So I take it that you do have somewhat of an open mind, which is a good sign.

Your government likes to follow Alberta and many of its initiatives. Alberta has an 85% factor, not a 100% factor, for utilization by students, and I just point that out to you.

When I raised this problem with your predecessor, Mr Johnson, he acknowledged that there was indeed a special, unique situation in the Ottawa-Carleton area, and he sent in an ADM to investigate and to see what happened. We never heard what the report was because an election changed the ballgame, and then there was a change of ministers and we're somewhat back to square one.

Minister, I'm inviting you to do three possible things: (1) Visit yourself, (2) send someone in to investigate what I am suggesting, or (3) receive a delegation from the Ottawa-Carleton area, not just from the school boards but also from the city or from the region as well, to lay this before you so that you can see the discrimination that is there by virtue of the amalgamation in that area and the demographic cleansing that is taking place. Will you take one of those three actions?

Hon Mrs Ecker: As I said to the honourable member, I have indeed met with the school boards, I believe actually on more than one occasion. Staff have met with them. I have also met with my MPP caucus colleagues, who have carried forward the concerns from the board. As I said, we have made improvements in funding. We have given the boards in Ottawa a little more flexibility in terms of some of the moneys that they had through development charges etc. But I'd also like to say to the

honourable member that surely he would like us to be able to make decisions based on the capital needs for schools, based on their long-range plans, and not do a knee-jerk reaction, a short-term reaction, because the boards have asked us for better longer-term decisions.

The other thing I would also like to say is that the way we fund boards on capital is allowing one of the biggest school building booms in this province we've seen in decades, so that many of those communities that have lagged far behind under the funding that the two previous governments had are now finally beginning to catch up.

TRILLIUM BOOK AWARD

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Historically, books have been the most powerful factor in the dissemination of knowledge and the most effective means of preserving it. Promoting books develops a fuller collective awareness of the cultural traditions throughout the world, and they exercise intellectual and spiritual freedom. Minister, can you inform the House about your ministry's celebration of literature, the Trillium Book Award?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank the member for Peterborough for the question. The Trillium Book Award recognizes literary excellence in Ontario. What we try to do with the Trillium Book Award is to support marketing and public awareness and the quality and diversity of books in Ontario.

Tomorrow night, the awards will be presented at the Royal Ontario Museum. The award winner will receive \$12,000 for the authors of both the French and the English books that are awarded this prestigious title. Also, the publishers will receive approximately \$2,500. The minister responsible for anglophone affairs and I will be there. We will be giving awards. There were 252 English books submitted for this award and 36 French books. We're very excited about the evening because we'll be recognizing great Ontario talent.

1510

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I invite members to join me in welcoming, in the Speaker's gallery, Louis-Philippe McGraw, who is an MPP from New Brunswick.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin petitions, we also have a new group of pages coming this time. We have Dylan Abreu-Coburn from Cambridge. We have Amber Beattie from London-Fanshawe. We have Melissa Brown from Mississauga West; Karen Cartier from Chatham-Kent-Essex; Rubina Cherian from Scarborough-Agincourt; Konrad Droske from Trinity-

Spadina; Brian Frost from Thunder Bay-Atikokan; Philip Grandine from Brant; Mark Gupta from Thornhill; Erica Hamel from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke; Katherine Job from Oakville; Megan Kirkey from Timiskaming-Cochrane. We have Jamie Newman from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock; Karyn Raymond from Parkdale-High Park; Reade Richard from Windsor West; Sean Robertson from Parry Sound-Muskoka; Marc Rodrigue from Nepean-Carleton; Greg Ryerson from Bruce-Grey and Sarah Shirk from Burlington. Would all members please join me in welcoming our new pages.

PETITIONS

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians with a developmental disability are in growing danger of inadequate support because compensation to staff in not-for-profit agencies is, based on a recent survey, on average, 20% to 25% less than compensation for others doing the same work in provincial institutions or similar work in other settings;

"Whereas there are hundreds of senior parents in Ontario who saved the Ontario government millions of dollars by keeping their children with developmental disabilities at home, and who are still caring for their adult children;

"Whereas there is no place for most of these adults with a developmental disability to go when the parents are no longer able to provide care;

"Whereas these parents live with constant anxiety and despair;

"Whereas these adult children will end up in Ontario nursing homes and hospitals if there is no appropriate place to provide care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To significantly increase compensation for workers in not-for-profit agencies so it is comparable to the compensation of government-funded workers in identical or similar occupations; and

"To provide the resources necessary to give appropriate support to Ontarians with developmental disability who at present have no place to go when their parents are no longer able to care for them."

ABORTION

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by over 900 good citizens of Cambridge.

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance;

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured;

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 46,000 abortions in 1995 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have literally hundreds of petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. This particular one comes from—I know the Speaker will be interested—the Group Health Centre in Sault Ste Marie.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I am pleased to sign this petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from my community of Hamilton.

"Whereas the Harris government has cut \$40 million from the budget of the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp, which has resulted in a health care crisis in Hamilton-Wentworth and left the HHSC with a \$40-million deficit; and

"Whereas the HHSC is now planning to downsize and cut back services at the Henderson General Hospital by converting the hospital to a daycare hospital with urgent care, rather than an emergency department; and

"Whereas this will have a serious impact on emergency services for the 200,000 residents of Hamilton Mountain, upper Stoney Creek, Glanbrook, Ancaster and other communities above the escarpment; and

"Whereas the mountain population is a rapidly growing community and deserves and needs a full-service hospital; and

"Whereas an ambulatory care centre is not an acceptable replacement for a 24-hour emergency ward; and

"Whereas it does not make sense to spend \$100 million for a new cancer centre rather than half that amount to expand existing facilities at the Henderson General Hospital; and

"Whereas Mike Harris said in February the Henderson would remain open for acute and cancer care;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario direct the Harris government to restore the funding cuts to the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp and develop long-term solutions for the maintenance of appropriate acute care services at the Henderson hospital to serve the needs of the growing population of Hamilton-Wentworth and central south Ontario."

Our caucus continues to support the petitioners and I do so by adding my name.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned members of the Wilmot Horticultural Society, strongly urge the preservation of the Oak Ridges moraine. The moraine is an environmentally sensitive area, home to many species of birds and other wildlife. The moraine acts as a purification system for a large watershed and should remain as such.

"As always, human habitation will bring about destruction and contamination. Please halt the decimation of yet another area."

It's signed by quite a number of my constituents in Wilmot township.

STUDDed TIRES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it deals with the law banning the use of studded tires.

"Whereas personal safety on winter roadways would be greatly increased; and

"Whereas improved technology on studded tires has proven in other countries and provinces they will not damage the roadways; and

"Whereas studded tires are used in many northern countries and all other provinces in Canada; and

"Whereas studies have proven that studded tires outperform all-seasonal and winter tires; and

"Whereas studded tires can save lives;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To rescind the law banning the use of studded tires in Ontario."

This petition has been collected by Allan Cloutier and Pat Cormier.

1520

ABORTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I have been waiting to present a petition on behalf of constituents in Durham who represent Mother Theresa's Catholic Women's League in Courtice—Mrs Pat Wilson. I might mention there is Mary and David Feldstein and Penny Manion and others. I've read this petition before and will continue to read it.

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas we have recently learned that our tax money is being used to pay the rent on the Morgentaler abatory; and

"Whereas by the end of this lease this amount will be \$5 million;

"Whereas we strongly object to the use of our tax dollars for this purpose;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately cease these payments."

I am pleased to sign this petition.

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads like this:

"Whereas Ontarians with a developmental disability are in growing danger of inadequate support because compensation to staff of not-for-profit agencies is, based on a recent survey, on average, 20% to 25% less than compensation for others doing the same work in provincial institutions or similar work in other settings; and

"Whereas there are hundreds of senior parents in Ontario who saved the Ontario government millions of dollars by keeping their child with a developmental disability at home, and who are still caring for their adult child; and

"Whereas there is no place for most of these adults with a developmental disability to go when the parents are no longer able to provide care; and

"Whereas these parents live with constant anxiety and despair; and

"Whereas these adult children will end up in Ontario nursing homes and hospitals if there is no appropriate place to provide care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To significantly increase compensation for workers in not-for-profit agencies so that it is comparable to the compensation of government-funded workers in identical or similar occupations; and

"To provide the resources necessary to give appropriate support to Ontarians with a developmental disability who at present have no place to go when their parents are no longer able to care for them."

I have put my signature to this in agreement.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition that affects thousands of people regarding housing that the government is planning to divest itself of.

"Whereas the Harris government's plan to force the sale of subsidized housing in Hamilton-Wentworth will create a crisis for 700 local families; and

"Whereas in addition to these 700 families there are 3,700 other families on waiting lists who will be left without affordable accommodation; and

"Whereas, where are these families supposed to go when we know there is not enough decent, affordable housing to meet their needs? and

"Whereas the Harris government's housing sell-off is mean-spirited and targets the poorest families who are now threatened with possible eviction;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario direct the Harris government to save these affordable housing units for low-income families, and support new affordable housing to help the 3,700 families on waiting lists in our community."

I proudly add my name to those of these petitioners.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Mike Harris's misnamed Tenant Protection Act has removed the rights of Ontario's tenants and created a huge legal imbalance in favour of landlords; and

"Whereas the Harris government's policies have led directly to the affordable housing crisis and resulting homelessness in Ontario today; and

"Whereas a recent study by the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation has proven that there are some systemic flaws in the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal process that have led to large-scale loss of housing without due process; and

"Whereas the provision of so-called maximum rent increases, coupled with vacancy decontrol and low vacancy

rates, has placed tenants in a very vulnerable position; and

"Whereas full disclosure of the disposition of cases brought to the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal are not given to credit-reporting agencies; and

"Whereas Don Valley East MPP David Caplan has introduced Bill 36 with the support of Parkdale-High Park MPP Gerard Kennedy"—and that of others in the House—"to address the imbalance and unfairness in the TPA;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support and protect tenants by immediately calling Bill 36 for debate and passage."

This is signed by hundreds of people in my riding. I am very proud to affix my signature to it.

AGRICULTURAL DIPLOMA COURSES

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "Whereas recent announcements by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) reduced their educational budget grant to the University of Guelph by \$3.5 million; and

"Whereas this funding reduction will adversely affect the agricultural diploma courses which the University of Guelph oversees at Ridgetown, Kemptville, Alfred and agricultural diploma courses at the University of Guelph; and

"Whereas it is vital for the agricultural industry to have a practical, trained talent pool for business and leadership; and

"Whereas diploma courses at agricultural colleges account for only a small portion of OMAFRA's budget; and

"Whereas Ontario's agri-food industry contributes \$25 billion annually to the provincial economy and generates \$6.2 billion in agri-food exports and employs more than 640,000 people; and

"Whereas, if agriculture is to compete on its own and be competitive in world markets, it must have and maintain a source of well-trained personnel; and

"Whereas OMAFRA has recently announced several new programs which will cost millions of dollars and not benefit agriculture directly, in the same way that diploma courses would;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we the undersigned petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That OMAFRA provide the financial support to maintain the colleges and ensure the present agriculture college diploma courses are continued and that funding for research facilities of the colleges also be maintained. This petition began as a resolution of the township of West Perth and it has been circulated to ROMA/Good Roads, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Premier and the local MPP."

I'm in total agreement with it.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Black Sturgeon Road in the district of Thunder Bay is an important access road for fishing and hunting to area lakes and forests;

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is attempting to block access to this road by refusing to implement upgrades;

"Whereas a vast area will be rendered inaccessible unless the government maintains responsibility for this road;

"Whereas the government has recently increased fees for hunting and fishing and has considerable funds in its special purpose account;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to use funds from the Ministry of Natural Resources special purpose account to maintain the Black Sturgeon Road as an important access road to protect the rights and freedoms of fishers and hunters in the district of Thunder Bay."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this petition.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas essential health care services have been deprived of government funding because the Conservative government of Mike Harris has diverted these funds to self-serving propaganda in the form of pamphlets delivered to homes, newspaper advertisements and radio and TV commercials;

"Whereas the Harris government advertising blitz is a blatant abuse of public office and a shameful waste of taxpayers' dollars;

"Whereas the Harris Conservatives ran on a platform of eliminating what it referred to as 'government waste and unnecessary expenditures,' while it squanders well over \$100 million on clearly partisan advertising;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative government and Mike Harris to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising."

I affix my name to this petition as I'm in complete agreement.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): I move that pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 55, An Act to make parents responsible for wrongful acts intentionally committed by

their children, when Bill 55 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That the order for third reading of the bill may then immediately be called. When the order for third reading is called, the remainder of the sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At 5:55 pm or 9:25 pm, as the case may be on such day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That, pursuant to standing order 28(h), the vote on third reading may be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceedings "Deferred Votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

1530

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask your indulgence for just one brief moment to suggest to you that in terms of the traditions and spirit of this place, this motion is entirely not only unwarranted but out of order. The fact of the matter is that it's a blackmail motion that was earlier tried on our caucus to force us to accept only two days of hearings on a bill this government says they're so proud of, which would have amounted to just a few hours.

We know through our critic, the member for Niagara Centre, that from here on in the government's just going to ram this issue right through and not give all those individuals and groups who want an opportunity—and, I'm reminded by my colleague, families also—to address this. The government says they care so much about what the public thinks, and we're not being given an opportunity. We countered with five days, which we think is the bare minimum that this bill needs, and the government just said no, with a wave of their hand.

We didn't know what they were going to do. This is what they're going to do. They're going to ram it through yet again. No public hearings whatsoever. We need you, Speaker, through your office, to provide us with that fair level of democracy so that our voice, and therefore the voices out there that have concerns about this, will be heard. Speaker, we implore you to please rule this out of order and force the government to return to negotiations with the three House leaders so that we can find a compromise that we can all live with, rather than this all-or-nothing, "my way or the highway" approach to governance.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Further to this point of order, Mr Speaker: Just very quickly, I want to point out as well that the two days that the government House leader offered would mean the hearings would be here in Toronto. There are people all across the province who have concerns about this, who

want answers to their questions. We implore you to ask that we all go back and negotiate this so that people all across the province will have an opportunity to come with their views on this.

Hon Mr Turnbull: There are many precedents for this and there is nothing unusual or out of the ordinary in doing this. The Speaker will recognize that such action has been taken on other occasions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): I have not been privy to the negotiations that have gone on among House leaders where this motion is concerned, and in fact those negotiations can continue to happen while we debate the order that's in front of us. There in fact is nothing out of order in the motion that has been made.

Mr Turnbull moves notice of motion number 39 and Mr Turnbull has the floor.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think my colleagues who want to make a presentation in regard to this would like a quorum in the House today. It seems to me there's no quorum here.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: OK. The member for St Paul's.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My first response to this motion is, why? Why are we ramming through this flagship of the government's law-and-order agenda? This legislation was hyped up before the House began in session as one of the premier bills that were coming before this House. I can read, but I don't have the time to read because of this time allocation motion, the media reports and all the attempts by this government, both in the House and outside the House, to spin this piece of legislation as part of its flagship—I use the word they've used—along with the squeegee bill, but for this session the flagship of their law-and-order agenda was going to be the Parental Responsibility Act. In the fullness of time we discovered that the act was a sham. In fact it was, like the squeegee bill, all talk and no action. It was an act that said it was going to promote parental responsibility, but in fact at the end of the day it is going to have no effect whatsoever in terms of a positive contribution with respect to parental responsibility in Ontario and, if anything, it is going to limit the rights of victims to collect against parents in the courts.

We were going to have a real debate on this, I thought, and that would have provided the opportunity to table amendments. I have amendments and I suppose I'll need to get them on the record, since there will be no other opportunity for Ontarians to consider what the alternatives were. The reality is that this government is not willing to listen to changes or amendments when it comes to any issue. On the issue of safe streets, they would like to think that they hold a trademark over the topic, when in fact Ontarians are beginning to know and learn very well that their unsafe streets are in part the product of the failure of their provincial government to do anything about crime. They talk a great talk about

crime, but they don't do anything about crime. Soon after the act was introduced, everybody noticed—it was an insult to the intelligence of voters to think that people wouldn't look to the comparable legislation in the province of Manitoba, where the act did nothing. It did nothing. In the years that the same act has been in place in Manitoba, it has been used just over a dozen times, with three orders against the parents. Because we have a time allocation motion, I'm not going to read those into the record. We had that opportunity, albeit short, during the previous debate, and now they're ramming it through.

I detect a pattern here and the pattern is this: This government floats out an issue on law and order. They hope to invent the concept first with respect to safe streets via the squeegee bill and now with respect to the Parental Responsibility Act. Then they test the waters and they see what happens on the talk shows and they read the editorials and they see if it catches on. In fact, this act turned out to be the same blunder that the squeegee bill was: It's going to have no effect whatsoever. So, what happens? Similar to the squeegee bill, the time allocation motion comes on and the bill is rammed through. "Let's get rid of this; let's not have hearings," the government says, because the last thing they would want to do is hold this bill under the microscope; the last thing they would want is to have it held accountable to the people by having people who know about this issue, who are experts in this issue, and even those who are not experts but are affected by this act, come in and speak to the act. That's democracy. Limited and imperfect as it may be, that's the way a democracy works in our current parliamentary system, but not under this government. In the words of the Minister of Transportation, there's "nothing unusual" about this time allocation motion. In fact, there is nothing unusual. There's nothing unusual about this government ramming through legislation, whether they think it popular or unpopular. There's nothing unusual about this government curtailing the very limited opportunity to hold people in this House accountable for the acts this government puts forward.

What we have with respect to law and order and crime in this province is a policy by podium, a policy by press release. It's grandstanding; it's talk; it's big props; it's great press conferences but no opportunity to actually debate the bill. Why? Because there's nothing in these bills. There's nothing in this bill. There's nothing in the squeegee bill. There's nothing that this bill will do. Don't believe me. One of the most famous civil libertarians in our country, Clayton Ruby, was asked about this bill because everybody wanted to know whether or not it violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In fact, the Attorney General suggested that it might be questionable under constitutional scrutiny. What a joke. There are no civil liberties being violated. There's nothing that this bill does. It's a civil bill. It's a civil remedy.

1540

How would the charter intervene? Of course it wouldn't. So they asked Clayton Ruby about it, thinking that he's going to come to the defence of parents of kids,

come to the defence of the victims, because that's what he does. He's a defence lawyer. They thought he was going to, not be the foil, but the one you can point to and say, "This is exactly the kind of person who wouldn't support this bill, because it's actually going to have an effect on our society and he's on the wrong side of this issue."

In fact, this is what Clayton Ruby said, and I quote: "So when they talk about increasing parental responsibility under this act, that's"—I don't know if I can repeat it in this House.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Say it anyway.

Mr Bryant: OK, I will. I'm encouraged by the member for Trinity-Spadina. "So when they talk about increasing parental responsibility ... that's bull," says Clayton Ruby. "There is no change to parental responsibility," he said, "None, zero." Let me say that again: "There is no change to parental responsibility. None, zero."

So Clayton Ruby, who everybody thought was going to pan this act because it violated civil liberties, said there is no problem with it under the Constitution. The problem is it's not going to do anything. It's going to do nothing, zero.

Slowly but surely, the chattering classes, the stakeholders, those who follow provincial politics, anybody tuning into this House, is starting to notice that this bill is yet another lemon. I don't know if it's as much of a lemon as the squeegee bill. I think it may be a worse lemon. We already knew before it was passed that it wasn't going to work, because we had a test case in Manitoba, where the act was a complete failure and did nothing for parental responsibility.

How could this bill have been improved? We could have had a debate over whether we ought to have helped victims by broadening the scope of the bill for victims so that they could go to any court to seek their remedy, not just Small Claims Court, as under this bill, and also for personal injury and death, not just for property crimes, as under this bill.

We could have had a discussion, as I would have proposed, to help victims by removing this bill's blueprint for defence counsel. It lists all the excuses that parents can make when they go before the courts, cut and pasted right out of the Manitoba legislation. How is that going to help victims of crime? I'd remove that blueprint which gives parents new excuses for getting out of their responsibilities. Let's leave it to the courts to work out the common law defences. That's what we had in Ontario up until now in section 68 of the Family Law Act, under the unlitigated remedies that already exist, because victims do not have the time or resources to go and sue parents for something their kids did.

This government says they want to help victims, but how are they going to help them? They say, "Go sue the people whom you were victimized by." That's no help at all. I would have liked to have debated whether we should amend this bill to help victims by exempting them

from having to cover court filing fees. That would have been of some minimal assistance. But this government didn't want to have that debate. This government didn't want to hear anything about doing something about parental responsibility. They wanted to just talk about it. Now they don't even want to talk about it anymore.

I think we should've had a discussion promoting parental responsibility by giving courts the discretion to order parents found liable by the court to complete, at the cost of the provincial government, the same parental training-counselling program that is undertaken in parental responsibility bills with far more teeth in the United States, such as in the state of California.

I would have liked to have a discussion about promoting individual responsibility for young offenders by giving the courts the discretion to order that the kids repay their parents for damages however the court sees fit, because the main principle behind this bill says that if you, young offender, break the window, you're now off the hook and your parents are on the hook. In the abstract, that's an important debate to have. The reality, the practicality of this bill, is that we would never have seen those parents get put on the hook, but the principle was that the kids were off the hook.

I thought this government was serious about individual responsibility, and if they were, we would have had a debate about whether it makes sense to take kids off the hook and put parents on the hook for what they do. What I would propose as an amendment is that we give courts the discretion to order that the kids have to repay their parents. That's the way it ought to work in the families of Ontario. But that's not the way it's going to work under this act, because we didn't even have the opportunity to debate the bill.

What's most concerning about this motion is exactly what the transportation minister said, that there's "nothing unusual" about this motion. This House has become a place where debate no longer is taking place. We yell and scream and shout past each other. The collegiality is completely non-existent. The opportunities to present amendments do not exist. Here's a bill that cried out for amendments, yet no opportunity for amendments was provided.

I know I'm not allowed to call myself a rookie MPP, based on what Speaker Carr said when this session first started, that, "There are no more rookies in this House," but I can tell you, as someone who may not be a rookie but at least is a sophomore, before I came here I never imagined that the debate was going to be so stifled, that there were going to be no opportunities for motions or amendments or real debate. I had this naive thought that the business of the people is done here. Instead we get motions and we're told by this government that it's not unusual to ram through bills. What's the point of this legislative chamber but to debate these important matters, and if parental responsibility is important to this government why on earth wouldn't we debate it? Well, the answer is clear: The reason is that this bill has turned out to be a flop and a lemon and they want the story to go

away. They don't want people to come in during hearings. They don't want people to make submissions to committees telling everybody who's willing and able to listen that this bill isn't going to do anything.

I want to, Ontario Liberals want to, I would have hoped that everybody in this House would want to do something about parental responsibility. This bill doesn't do it. This motion is a travesty. Unfortunately, it's nothing unusual in the dishonourable tyranny that is this government.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This is an incredibly interesting scenario we find ourselves in, isn't it? I'm going to go through the history of what happened today. I think it's important that people understand exactly what kind of scam, what kind of sleazy, scummy little game the government tried to play. But I think the people are on to them, especially when it comes to this bill.

This is a motion, so it doesn't have a title. But were it a bill that the Tories had presented today it would probably be called the "Gutless wonder" bill, the "We screwed up big-time and we gotta run and hide now" bill, the "This doesn't have any spin, it didn't get any legs out there in the public so we'd better bury it" bill, the "We misread the public one more time and we'd better duck" bill.

I'll tell you what happened, interestingly, because I've never seen this before. It might have happened and maybe I wasn't paying attention; that's possible, I suppose. The Tories tabled two notices of motion. To understand this perfectly clearly, one was this motion, order paper number 39, which said no committee hearings, slammed the door on the public and their participation in this debate because we told these people last week that they've opened the Pandora's Box now. This isn't just about the black print on the paper, because as has already been noted by so many experts out there—scholars, legal professors, other observers—this bill doesn't create new law. It restates the laws that exist. When I and other members of the New Democratic Party and, quite frankly, the other opposition party spoke to this Legislature, we said the same sorts of things: There's nothing new about this—oh, an attempt on the part of the Tories to make it look as if they somehow reinvented the wheel. They've declined to give credit to the NDP-Liberal accord government of 1997–1987, rather; time flies—which implemented section 68 of the Family Law Act, which of course shifts the onus on to parents to prove that they had appropriate supervision and control of their delinquent kids and enables victims of those delinquencies to sue those parents if they were negligent in the course of the supervision of those kids.

1550

I understand why Tory backbenchers didn't want to speak to the bill. I understand that. Quite frankly, Tory backbenchers, once they have their crib sheets, their scripts, are silent more often than not. Again, the Tories said this was big news—a big press conference, the

Attorney General with his photographs. Of course, the press shot him down within minutes when they confronted him with section 68, because this was the hallmark piece of this bill. The press gallery said, "But, Mr Attorney General"—because, you see, I'd gone to the press conference. I'd made sure the press gallery had copies of section 68. It would have been unfair for them to have been there without copies of section 68 of the Family Law Act so they could question the Attorney General as to what's new about this legislation. So this was supposed to be a real spin piece for the government.

We have two notices of motion. One shuts this debate down with zero committee hearing, zero third reading debate, which means that the public—and I've received numerous e-mails, letters, telephone calls about this. Down in my riding this past weekend, people stopped me. What's interesting is that people who I know are, I acknowledge it, by their very nature somewhat conservative—I was over at Cox Home and Garden Centre in South Pelham, and a gentleman whom I know to be, yes, rather conservative, said, "Are these guys nuts?" He said: "What are they doing? What kind of games are they playing? Who do they think they're kidding?" The garbage that was coming out of him, somehow—because, you see, part of the game is to say, "Oh, the opposition are soft on crime." Horse feathers. We're just big on truth—big difference. We're just big on the facts and we're just big on exposing the phony and, more often than not, dangerous type of spin that this government tries to put on the real tragedy of youth crime.

Let me make it quite clear. Any Tory member who would suggest otherwise is either lying, if he or she were to say that, or is ignorant. They would either be lying or ignorant if they were to suggest that somehow our concern about this legislation has anything to do with being soft on crime. I know the scenario they're trying to paint. I heard the parliamentary assistant. It was so cute: They should have spoken to the motion first, but they're going to play it cute and they're going to have the final word today. God bless. Feel free, Tory backbenchers. Have the final word, but at the end of the day the public has already been able to scrutinize your tactics around this piece of legislation, has already seen enough analysis of it to understand that this stuff is as phony as a three-dollar bill. This is one that this government isn't going to get away with, not in the public's mind, not in their eyes.

There are two notices of motion, the one we're speaking to today, which is going to be voted on in two hours, and there was another one; it provided for—oh, we should be so grateful—two afternoons of committee hearings. Two afternoons. Do you know what that means? Maximum two and a half hours in the afternoon. The Tories control the committee, so they'll stack it up with a half hour of address from the parliamentary assistant or a deputy minister or a gang of minions from the Ministry of the Attorney General, and then they'll trot through the handful of handpicked proponents of this legislation. The people with real concerns, the people with expertise out there, the people who would question

whether or not this bill really has anything to do with the rights of victims at all would not be heard, and if they were heard it would be for the briefest time slots, about 10 and 15 minutes a shot. Hardly public hearings, is it? And but one afternoon for clause-by-clause consideration, two and a half hours? Get off it. Barely sufficient time to either present amendments or to properly debate them and/or to seek the advice of, among others, people like legislative counsel. It was a joke. But it was a sad, pathetic joke, because it was an insult to this Legislature, it was an insult to the public, it was an insult to victims of youth crime, and an insult to the families who have to cope and grapple with kids who have become delinquents and who have ended up in our young offender courts.

Others may have been prepared to go along with that, but there were no deals to be made from this caucus. No way were we going to buy into that pathetic, sad, miserable insult to democracy of but two afternoons of public hearings. I tell you quite frankly, I asked my House leader to go back to the government House leader and say: "It needs five days minimum. If you want concessions from us, at least five days, because we've got enough people to fill up five days at our caucus from contacts we've got alone, and Lord knows the other opposition party has as many, if not more."

You know the strategy. Of course, the parliamentary assistant is going to rise to his feet at some point this afternoon and he's going to say, "Oh, they could have had public hearings." That's what he's going to say; he's going to say that. "They could have had, but they blew it." If he says that, he's lying, and if he says that, he's a liar. If he says that we're soft on crime, he's a liar. If he says that we skewered public hearings, he's a liar.

The Acting Speaker: I would caution the member to not use that kind of language in the House.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Speaker.

If he stands up and suggests that it was anybody other than the government who chose to proceed with no public hearings, there has been a sad and less than accurate presentation of the facts.

This government never had any intention of public hearings around this bill. This bill has been floundering out there in the public eye. This government's history, its five years when it comes to victims, has been as serious an assault on victims as the assaults originally perpetrated by those criminals. I've talked to you, Speaker, about the cases of Linda Even and Karen Vanscoy, cases that Jim Bradley and I raised in this Legislature with the previous Attorney General of Mr Harris. Quite frankly, he makes this Attorney General—well, which of the two would you rather have? It's a tough choice to make, isn't it? I've talked about litigation, as you are well aware, where the courts in this province indicted this government's so-called Victims' Bill of Rights. Judge Day—we've quoted him. You've heard us here, as we've spoken to this bill, quote Mr Justice Day when Linda Even and Karen Vanscoy went to the courts to seek remedies, yes, to seek remedies under the so-called Victims' Bill of Rights, and the judge said: "There are no rights here. This bill is worthless." If this government

This bill is worthless." If this government were serious about victims' rights, it would have presented remedial legislation, which I assure you would have gotten co-operative passage from members of the opposition parties. I can assure you of that. But, no, they want to play games around the incredibly serious problem of youth crime.

1600

We have indicated quite clearly that we believe all crime has to be dealt with promptly, effectively and sternly and has to be responded to meaningfully, so that you don't just lock somebody up and then release them 12 months later with no changes being made in their life—no two ways about that. But here's a government that's abandoning its responsibility for corrections in this province, be it at the young offender level or at the adult level, as it privatizes its correctional facilities, both young offender and adult, and turns them over to the private, for-profit corporate American sector, which is engaged in the mere business of prisons for profit, dungeons for dollars, rather than in the process of meaningful corrections so that you reduce levels of recidivism, so that you respond sternly and effectively to delinquent youth or adults.

I read a column by Eric Dowd, who all of us know here at Queen's Park. He has been around a long time. The recent column by Eric Dowd made reference to how the Harris government is starting to sound tacky in their naming of new laws. For instance, he writes:

"The Premier has a Safe Streets Act which implies it eliminates all robbers and rapists but whose main effect is to prohibit squeegee kids from offering their services. It could as aptly be called the Keep Windshields Dirty Act.

"He also has a grandiosely titled Victims' Bill of Rights law which a court has already ruled in a test case is mere rhetoric and gives no rights to anyone."

The Parental Responsibility Act? How about a little bit of governmental responsibility. How about a little bit of governmental responsibility for ensuring that our police forces are adequately staffed and have the resources they need to deal effectively with crime. How about a government that accepts its responsibility to properly staff its correctional facilities with trained professional correctional officers and public sector servants and staff them in an adequate way so that communities are safe and so that correction actually takes place.

Parent responsibility? How about some governmental responsibility for ensuring that those families in crisis with delinquent kids have some access to children's mental health programs and children's mental health centres, and that the schools that these kids go to have the adequate and properly trained professional resource staff to help kids who are beginning to show signs of going very much off track before they start committing those youth crimes. How about some governmental responsibility over here.

But, no, it doesn't want to hear from families. I just got an e-mail from a gentleman here in Ontario. He says:

"I am writing to explain my concern about this proposed legislation, Bill 55. As the parent of two adoptive boys, I have grave concerns about the problems this bill may cause." He writes that he had once been a strong believer in the nurture over nature argument of raising children, and I understand that; that is, that a child's environment is what ultimately shapes who they become. He writes, "This type of legislation may prevent people from adopting children with emotional problems or problems of poor impulse control and make victims of already stressed and disadvantaged parents."

The author of that brief note to me speaks volumes in that short paragraph about his own experience as a good parent, as a very caring parent, as a very responsible parent who clearly, one can assume, either has had some difficulties with his own young children or is aware, through his professional role, of problems other families have had. He would very much, I'm sure, have liked a chance to address this bill in committee, to raise the concerns he's got, to say, "When is this government going to accept some of its responsibility and help people like me?" like the author of this letter, who are trying to take care of kids who are seriously troubled, some of them very damaged, kids who can become very dangerous to our community.

Please don't get me wrong. I'm not suggesting that every adopted kid runs that risk. Of course not. Anybody who suggests that is making a stupid comment. But this person authors on behalf of what I would suggest is a whole lot of parents of both adopted and biological children who say: "Look, we've gone the full gamut. We've put the second mortgage on the house to send the kid off to a residential school or to a military-style academy. We've paid for the private psychiatrists and the therapies."

I can bring families to committee who will talk about the family breakdowns that occur when you've got a delinquent kid in there, the divorces, the damage and harm it does to other kids, the siblings. But no, this government doesn't want to talk about that. This government doesn't want to talk about how families are trying to cope out there with their delinquent kids and are receiving less and less support from the institutions and agencies that, historically, government has a responsibility to provide. This government is slamming the door in their faces, and then it plays the stunt that it plays today, plays this cheap game, the saddest form of politics, trying to blackmail the opposition into accepting but two days of public hearing, two afternoons—they're not full days; make that very clear—most of which will be occupied by introductory statements by any number of bureaucrats and, as I said, minions, when there are folks out there who want to discuss this. There are lawyers who want to discuss its implications and law professors who want to discuss its history in other jurisdictions and indeed its history to date in Ontario, which has provided net relief for victims.

There are a whole lot of questions to be answered about how this government would propose to make this bill work, even though it is a mere restatement of a law as

it exists. There are a whole lot of questions from sociologists. I put to you people like Professor Ambert, whom I talked about when I talked about this bill last week, who has had decades now of working with families of delinquent children and has some very important things to say to the members of this Legislature, if only they would have permitted committee hearings.

It's only a motion; it has no title. I suppose if it did, in addition to all the others I've suggested, it might have been, "If you're going to lie, lie big; lie often." I suppose if you lie with dogs, you get fleas, just so you don't think that I'm somehow engaging in unparliamentary language, Speaker. Let me put this to you: Diogenes could spend not just a day but a week, but a month travelling back and forth across those Tory back benches, and he'd still walk out of here empty-handed.

I am opposed to this time allocation motion. I'm opposed to them in principle, but this particular instance exposes this government as being the bullies they indeed are so often, as having no real concern for victims but in fact only concern for getting their political message out there via either taxpayers' dollars and expensive radio and television ads or via legislation with cute but so often tacky sounding names that create, on first instance, the biggest misimpression that could ever be created. Misimpression—I'm being polite, aren't I, Speaker? I'm avoiding unparliamentary language like "lie," because people who lie are liars, and liars have no place in this Legislature.

1610

My colleagues will be joining me in speaking to this bill. I find today's action repugnant. I find it an assault on democracy. I find it an insult to victims and to the people of this province. If this government thinks it can play the game any more of blackmail with opposition members, persuading us to buy into its deals with no negotiation for fear of somehow painting us as being opposed to what it will present as Mom-and-apple-pie legislation, it's got another think coming. No more of those deals. You don't win a battle on your knees. Do you know that?

We've got to take on a government that has big numbers, and among those numbers very few members with sufficient guts or moral fortitude or the integrity to stand up—well, show them to me this afternoon. Show me the Tory backbenchers who will stand up and vote against this legislation, who will demonstrate some integrity, who will demonstrate some guts, who will demonstrate a little bit of concern for the parliamentary process. Where are the Tory members today who will stand up and vote against this bill and show some respect for the public to ensure that they have access to public hearings? I'm looking forward to seeing them. A little bit of guts and a little bit of integrity, that's all I've asked for this afternoon. I'm afraid we're going to find precious little of either.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): It's my pleasure to rise today in support of the motion of time allocation with regard to the bill. I was determining when the genesis for this bill arose, and I happen to have a copy of

the Ontario Crime Control Commission report on youth crime issued in May 1998, almost two full years ago. I had the pleasure and privilege of serving on that commission and we travelled the province. As a matter of fact, we've had over 70 public forums and events around this province.

In this report, we made a number of recommendations. We made some recommendations to the federal government to toughen up the Young Offenders Act. We recommended that this government pass a Safe Schools Act. We suggested the establishment of what we called citizenship courts, and actually, as established as a pilot project, there are now community youth courts, and last, we recommended a parenting and parental responsibility act.

I was interested, as I went through the report, to notice the areas to which we travelled to discuss the concerns of ordinary citizens of Ontario, and this report embodies those concerns. This is not the report of myself or my co-commissioners at the time; these were meant to address the concerns of the ordinary citizens we met at various public forums.

On July 14, 1997, we were in Chatham; on August 28, 1997, in Barrie; September 8, 1997, in Etobicoke; September 23, 1997, in Peterborough; September 29, 1997, in Ottawa; September 30, 1997, in Whitby; January 15, 1998, in Port Colborne; January 29, 1998, in Oakville; on February 18, 1998, we visited the city of Hamilton; on March 10, 1998, I had the privilege of hosting a crime control forum in Cambridge, which was exceptionally well attended; on March 19, 1998, we were in Burlington; on March 26, 1998, in Bracebridge; on April 2, 1998, in Newmarket; on April 8, 1998, in York Mills in Toronto; on April 9, 1998, in Belmont; on April 14, 1998, back in Toronto in the High Park-Parkdale riding; on Wednesday, April 15, 1998, we were again in the city of Hamilton; on May 5, 1998, we were in the city of Toronto and Etobicoke-Rexdale; on Thursday, May 14, 1998, we visited the city of Bramalea; on Tuesday, May 19, 1998, we visited the city of Kitchener. We heard from hundreds, if not thousands, of ordinary citizens voicing their concerns, and one of those concerns was the lack of responsibility that a few isolated parents felt for the actions of their own children.

I'd like to emphasize that it was not the vast majority of parents that raised this concern, but a small, isolated group, and that is the reason for this legislation. Safe communities are about being free from the fear of violence against person, family and property; respect for others and taking responsibility for actions; homes that are sanctuaries and people's property that is safe and secure; places where people go about their busy and productive lives without experiencing property damage.

Safe communities are about municipal parks and transit vehicles that aren't damaged, cars that aren't stolen and defaced, businesses that don't have graffiti scrawled on the storefronts and on the doors.

Statistics tell the story. In 1998, almost 20,000 cases of property crime were heard in youth court in Ontario.

Those are the ones that had charges, not the ones that may not even have been reported. This represents 47% of all youth crime. I suggest that this is not fair to victims. I ask the question, why should victims bear the cost of property damage inflicted by someone else? Why should the taxpayers assume the cost of vandalism to public property?

Our government is committed to safe communities. The Parental Responsibility Act would help us to do more to achieve that goal. The act would help restore principles of respect for the law and taking responsibility for actions. Parental responsibility already exists in Manitoba, and at least one province in addition to Ontario is considering such a law.

I believe and this government believes that all victims of crime deserve justice. The Parental Responsibility Act would help victims of property crime get the justice they so justly deserve. Police, community leaders, safety organizations, business, seniors—all have indicated they felt an act of this kind was necessary. They want the Parental Responsibility Act to give victims of property crime the tools to get justice.

The Parental Responsibility Act would reduce the onus on the part of the victim to prove his or her case. It would be easier for victims to use evidence under the Young Offenders Act. Victims would be able to get compensation from parents more easily through Small Claims Court for damage deliberately caused by other people's children. Under the current law, parents have a duty to supervise their children and they may be liable if they are negligent in that duty. However, the burden of proof is on the victim, and this isn't fair to the victim.

Under the current law, victims must show that they suffered damage, that the damage was related to the conduct of the parents, that there is a duty recognized in law to control a child's activities and, lastly, that the damage was reasonably foreseeable. This puts a considerable burden on the victim. Our government wants to make it easier for victims to get justice by simplifying the approach.

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Under the proposed Parental Responsibility Act, a victim would only have to prove that a child caused the property damage and establish the amount of damages. The rest would be up to the offender's parents. They would have to then show—and I'm talking about the parents of the child responsible—that the youth acted unintentionally or that the parents exercised reasonable supervision over the child and made reasonable efforts to prevent the child from causing the damage.

For property damages under \$6,000, we have improved upon Ontario's existing legislation and Manitoba's parental responsibility in three ways. First, victims do not need to prove that the young person acted intentionally. It would be presumed that the young person acted intentionally, unless a parent could show otherwise. Second, parents must prove that they took reasonable efforts to prevent the damage from occurring. This isn't now specified in the Family Law Act. Third, victims

would be able to use a Young Offenders Act disposition to help prove their case. This provision makes it simpler for the victims of property crime to seek compensation in Small Claims Court.

As I previously said, most parents, in fact the vast majority of parents, in Ontario are responsible and do their best to supervise their children properly. While the world is changing, the role of parents in teaching their children standards of behaviour has not changed. The proposed act would reinforce those standards and expectations. It is commonly agreed that parents are responsible for their children.

This act is realistic about the challenges parents encounter. There may be parents with special challenges, and that's recognized in the act. Parents may have children with severe behavioural problems or who are too young to understand the consequences of their actions. They may have children who continue to misbehave after receiving counselling and/or treatment. The Parental Responsibility Act would take this into account.

Parents who can prove their children's actions are not intentional of course would not be held liable. The law already recognizes that certain people are not capable, because of age or capacity, of forming the intent to cause harm. The courts would decide each case on a case-by-case basis.

The proposed legislation would make parents responsible for proving that they exercised reasonable supervision and that they made reasonable efforts to discourage their children from engaging in the destructive activity.

Factors that would be considered by the judge when determining parental liability include: the youth's age; the youth's prior conduct; the potential danger of the activity; the youth's mental or physical capacity; any psychological disorders affecting the child; whether the youth was under the direct supervision of the parents at the time when the damage or loss was caused; whether the parent had made reasonable arrangements for supervision; whether the parent had sought to improve his or her parenting skills; and whether a parent had sought professional assistance for the child. Each case would be judged individually by the court, based on these practical considerations.

Concern has been expressed about other situations that might affect their liability under the proposed act. For instance, what would happen if a teenager had left home? The courts would look at the individual circumstances of the situation and parents would not be held to an unfair standard.

Some have suggested that single parents and parents who have a low income would be disadvantaged by the act. Suggestions that parents in these circumstances are somehow lacking is, firstly, unfair. We don't believe there is a distinction between parenting skills based on income. Most parents are trying to do a good job in supervising their children. Teaching children right from wrong does not depend on income.

The courts would have the authority to order payments by instalment if a parent doesn't have the full means to pay the amount at one time.

There are also services available by the government to help parents. Some have said more community services are needed to help children with behavioural problems, but it is not so that only children with behavioural problems engage in property crime. For those parents who need help, the government provides access to a range of services designed to assist children and their families. Funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, these include community-based programs to assist children with mental health problems, developmental disabilities, children in need of protection and young offenders through counselling for children and youth and their parents, parenting skills teaching, prevention and early intervention programs, residential programs, clinical supports to children with mental problems, assessments and crisis intervention programs.

I reiterate: The purpose of this bill is to improve community safety, to reinforce the values of respect and responsibility, to make it easier for victims to get compensation for their property that was deliberately stolen, damaged or destroyed by other people's children. The Parental Responsibility Act would benefit children, who must learn the rights and responsibilities of living in our society. If parents make reasonable efforts to prevent their children from committing property crimes, communities would be safer.

Mr Curling: Here we go again. Here we go with this government that has now decided we are going to put closure on a bill. This government is in the habit of bringing the big stick out all the time and putting closure to bills without debate.

I recall that in the first election and the second election of this government they spoke about democracy and about the participation of all the people. They talked about common sense. The problem with this government and its common sense is that the only thing common about it is the dictatorial way in which it conducts itself. Since their re-election they have had 15 bills put through that have had royal assent. About 20 bills were put through and 15 of those have had royal assent. About 50% of those have had closure on them. I think I should explain to the public what all this means.

What we have before us today is a bill that is called "An Act to make parents responsible for wrongful acts intentionally committed by their children." Therefore, it calls for debate for those on whom this act will impact. It will have an impact on parents, children, principals, teachers and everyone who will be overseeing some of the acts done by young people. It is said that for all of these acts committed by young people, parents must be responsible for them. That's rather interesting. I thought parents were always responsible for their child, and they have done so very well.

What came to mind just today—because sometimes the real story comes out better than these acts—about two or three hours ago a young lady came to see me. She has

twins and she had reprimanded one of the twins for doing something wrong. She spanked the kid and a neighbour heard the cry and called the police. She was reprimanding her child for doing something wrong and they called the police. The twins are 9 years of age.

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Immediately the big parent, as we call the government, came in and took these children away from the home in October last year. As of today she has not got back her children because she reprimanded one of the children for stealing. You're telling me, when the big parent here has taken them away—and she's still waiting for them to judge whether or not she was a good parent. What is happening to the children? No one talks about that. In the meantime, the children have lived in about three or four homes. The psychological damage it's doing to those children no government can fix—none—not this government, which says they are the big daddy or the big parent of it all; they won't fix that.

We have a bill before us that needs debate. It needs public consultation. It needs people to have input, to tell them the story about how we can have better legislation. My feeling, and the feeling of people out there, is that in a democracy laws are made by the people and for the people, a democracy of participation. But here, today, this government is saying to us: "We shall not hear from the people. We will put closure on this. We know what is right." As far as they're concerned, democracy comes every four years or when they call an election.

Individuals like myself who represent people in a constituency should go away, should have no input, not even from this point of view of debating and putting amendments. Of course, my party is willing to put amendments, so let me be very frank with you: It's hogwash. No matter what amendments we put to this legislation, nothing will happen. They will not listen. They will ram this thing through accordingly. So we can always demonstrate, and be very articulate about, how great we are in this House. This government refuses to listen.

I don't know if you noticed, Mr Speaker, but I'll bring it to your attention: In the orders of the day there are two orders. One order talks about, "We will give a little bit, a couple of days of debate and discussion." The next order that follows says, "You shall have no time to debate." They have a right to call any order, so what did they do? They called the order with a big stick. They said: "I have two sticks in my hand here. There is a big stick and here is a bigger stick. If we can get away with it, we want to use the bigger stick. The bigger stick is to say no debate, no consultation. We know what's right."

You heard the member just previous to me who stated, "We have been around the province and we have listened." I think he has it in reverse. This was introduced on April 4, and every consultation he had about legislation like this was before that. He has the cart before the horse, arrogance before consultation, because that's what they do. The fact is: "We know it's right. We know what's right. We don't need to come to the people to speak to them about this."

The people in our constituency call and wonder why they are not more involved and participating in the process. Why should they? This government doesn't listen. This government doesn't want to listen. They know what is right. The House of Parliament is a sham.

I get elected. I come in here and I feel very confident that I've listened to my people in the riding of Scarborough-Rouge River. I said: "Listen, I hear your concern. I'll bring it before the government." What will happen then?

Mr Marchese: Nothing.

Mr Curling: Nothing will happen, as my colleague says, nothing, because they have dead ears. They would just be deaf to the point of saying: "Why listen to them? We know exactly what we're doing." There is not one member in that government who will ever stand up and say, "While I agree with certain aspects of this legislation, I have some concerns here." They don't even have concerns about some aspects of it. All is perfect. Those on the backbenches are hoping and aspiring to be cabinet ministers, so they say yes to their leader; or they present themselves today to have a quorum so they can be counted and we can continue this debate, but of course not listening at all.

It concerns me very much why we are asking our people to participate in a democracy. Is it so they can bring out their big stick in a dictatorial manner, the bullying aspect of how they have conducted this government all the time and have conducted this province in that way?

I continue to be concerned, but I continue to have hope. I always believe that people are far ahead of the government of the day. The difficulty is that they don't listen, and I presume they know that. They know it very well. If they did listen, they would show off their ignorance and their arrogance, so "Let us not listen." What we present as the opposition is what we hear from the people out there. What's wrong with hearing from parents? I would love to have some young people come here and speak before Parliament and say, "We are concerned about some of the issues you have put forward here." But, oh no, we have no opportunity to speak. "We shut this down. We call it closure. We have this big stick. We have that power."

Do you know what has happened? I've got to mention this, because the fact is not only that the government is sort of bullying, but the procedures here, the regulations that govern how we conduct ourselves here, restrict us in how we speak because we have negotiated all of our rights. All the House leaders will get together, and the government has the right of the day, and they put forward their agenda regardless of whatever. Therefore we are restricted, as the opposition, to put forward constructive criticism and amendments themselves. There are many amendments we would like to put forward, but I would also say that putting forward these amendments will get us nowhere. It will get us nowhere because the fact is that they have already made up their minds.

I want to say too that as a parent I would be concerned if I had reprimanded my child in a certain direction and

went before a judge who then tells me that I have not done enough, when I wanted help, when this government should have given help to parents who needed it. When they needed financial support, they cut their welfare support and said, "You have too much money."

This is a government that also would like people to have private hospitals and private jails and privatize it all because they have a couple of their buddies lining up to buy out the jails and buy out the highways, and on and on like that. Where are those individuals in our society who would come forward?

Let me tell you one other story. I attended the funeral the other day of a young man who got shot and had been seen by about 300 people. When the police came forward to ask the people, "Have you seen anything?" they said no. Do you know what that tells us about our society? It tells us: "I don't even have any confidence in the police. I have no confidence in the system." What is happening now is that our society is decaying in that respect. Now the police who want to do a good job are unable to do so because they get no co-operation from individuals and citizens. They have no confidence in the way we run our country. It seems to me that when people are quiet—with that big stick they have, people are quiet—they over there say: "They're obeying because they like what we have done. We have spoken, therefore we don't need all of you to speak any more. We have consulted before we put the laws in place."

I'm very concerned about this legislation, about this closure. I could go on and on, and I know my colleagues would like to put their views forth, but I am also restricted by the same law that tells me I am to sit down now because they have restricted me in their regulation. No wonder I was moved, and many of our colleagues were moved, to say, "Listen, enough is enough."

I feel that we must continue to have a case for good democracy and bring the concerns—

Mr Kormos: You've got more to say.

Mr Curling: I've got lots to say, so much to say, but I will tell you that my colleagues would like to put their points of view, because they would like to have their constituents hear their points of view on this floor, although it may go for naught. But I tell you, I still do believe in the democratic process.

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Mr Marchese: I've only got 10 minutes. I've got to do this in only 10 minutes. I'm going to speak to the public directly, to the good people of Ontario. Because there are only a couple of Tories on the other side skulking away like slithering serpents, I've got to talk to the people directly about this bill. Who else can I talk to?

There are some serious concerns. Every now and then I feel like Sisyphus. Some of you on that side of the House who are relatively well read might know the mythical character. I feel like Sisyphus. You will recall, those of you who know, that for all eternity he was rolling the rock up the mountain, and the only respite he got, the only moment where he felt he was doing something worthwhile, was when he got to the top, which Camus, a

famous French writer, described as the moment of lucidity, where everything became clear and it made sense—

Mr Kormos: Until?

Mr Marchese: —until he has to roll the rock down again and toil right up once again.

I feel like that often in opposition, because that's the kind of work we do with this type of government. In relation to this bill, I'm fascinated by the way this government is handling it, because this is a law-and-order government, and this bill, about to be proclaimed very shortly, is a law-and-order bill. I assume they ought to be proud of this bill, yet another jewel in their crown.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Do they want this before the by-election?

Mr Marchese: The by-election doesn't matter. Yes, there's a by-election. Do they want this before the by-election? It's irrelevant. I will show you why in terms of their politics around this bill, because if this is a law-and-order government I would argue they ought to be proud and take this bill out, and not just for a day—

Mr Kormos: Or two.

Mr Marchese: —but for a couple of weeks, at least four, the way New Democrats used to do it. If I were proud of this bill, I would say to the members: "Boys, get ready. We've got to go out. We've got to work hard. We've got to show the public this is a bill that needs to be supported." And yet, two days. As the member for Welland Centre—

Mr Kormos: Two afternoons.

Mr Marchese: —pointed out, two days, but two afternoons—a couple of hours, because the government may decide that we need to have the minister come to speak to that bill. I'm assuming the person will have such great insights that perhaps we may have missed that he may occupy an entire hour just explaining the error of the opposition ways, because this minister was reported to have said the following, "In this bill we have provided that the onus will be on the parents to show that the act was not intentional," which is not the law as it is in Ontario today, argues this lawyer-minister, despite the misleading comments, attributable to the rest of us, that have been made to the contrary by some. This is our well-known lawyer Attorney General—

Mr Kormos: Who embarrassed himself at the Supreme Court a while ago?

Mr Marchese: Well, he embarrassed himself in many ways. Professor Larry Wilson points this out. He says—I've got to quote him, because I think it's important to quote the experts. I remind you, I urge the members who are sleeping on the other side to bring forth to this House some modicum of evidence, just a tiny little bit of evidence, to persuade me that perhaps just the one expert opinion that we've provided here is not sufficient and you've got some experts on the other side. But no evidence has been brought forth by the other side, because there is none. We're not talking about evidence. They know that. The issue is not evidence; the issue is, "Have we cajoled, fooled the public of Ontario enough that we can get away with two days, a couple of hours, and then

we move on?" That's what it's about. Please, don't confuse the whole issue with experts.

Mr Kormos: Or the facts.

Mr Marchese: Please. They don't want facts to be put out, because you see, if we did take this little show on the road, the experts would come and say to the Attorney General, a lawyer, "You're wrong, Mr Attorney General," and they would say to the members, "You're all fools if you should happen to follow suit, because he's wrong and you would all be wrong." They don't want that embarrassment on the road. That's why they want this little show to stay here in this little place, keep it to ourselves, and allow the public to be deceived by the illusion of law and order, "We, the Conservatives."

You remember the law-and-order squeegee bill? That's the bill that was going to clean the streets up from crime because the poor old ladies and the poor old men were so frightened when those little guys came to clean their windows that they needed protection from those little squeegee kids. So they introduced a law-and-order bill, the Safe Streets Act. Law-and-order guys, right?

The same law and order on the Victims' Bill of Rights, where Judge Day said, "There are no rights." It doesn't matter to these guys. "Have we deceived the public enough to convince them that they have rights? Yes, that's enough. We introduced Bill 55, that gives people an opportunity to take parents to court on the basis of some breaking of the law through property damage."

Professor Wilson says this: "We already have such a law in place. It's even stronger than the one you're proposing." He says, "Under the current law in Ontario, a negligent parent can be liable for both personal injury"—that goes beyond your bill—"and property damage caused by children." Make note of the fact that he says "liable for personal injury." Liability can include both intentional and unintentional acts of children, and there is no cap of \$6,000. At the moment, people can seek redress beyond the cap that you're putting on this of \$6,000. The current law states this. It's stronger than the one you're proposing.

Boys, you've got to listen to this stuff.

Mr Bradley: Why are we passing this bill, anyway?

Mr Marchese: I'll tell you in a second. I've already said this, but I'll repeat it. He says: "Specifically, section 68"—of the other law—"of the current Family Law Act, the parent is required to show that they have exercised reasonable supervision and control of the child. What then does this proposed legislation offer in terms of advancing or even altering the current state of law in Ontario?" He says, "Nothing," zip.

What have we done by the introduction of Bill 55, except to again deceive the good people of Ontario, that this is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): I think the member would perhaps want to reconsider the word "deceive" and withdraw it.

Mr Marchese: Do you think so? Are you asking that I withdraw that word?

The Acting Speaker: Yes, I am.

Mr Marchese: Oh, my God. I withdraw that word and move on, because I've got two minutes to say to the people of Ontario, you are being offered placebo politics. You are being offered illusional politics, stuff that makes you feel good. That's the kind of politics they're into. Does it make you feel good, good people of Ontario, if I tell you I'm introducing a bill that's going to re-establish law and order, bring responsibility to families?

If the answer is yes, you've done your job. But when we answer in opposition as a way of suggesting to you that the current law is stronger than the one that you have redressed, what do government members say to that? You don't. You skulk away like the amphibians that many of you are.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): We're not that bad.

Mr Marchese: Oh, you are—crustaceans to the core.

I say to you that I am not deceived by this bill. I am not deceived—Speaker, come on.

The Acting Speaker: Just withdraw the word.

Mr Marchese: I withdraw it. It is improper for me to say, "I am not deceived by it."

For all the members of this place who have concerns for victims, and there is not one member in this House who doesn't have concerns for victims, at least on our side, on the opposition side, and who doesn't decry and feel tremendous disdain for any criminal activity of any kind, what people need are supports, the supports that have been taken away. In Windsor-Essex there are 1,000 children on a waiting list for mental health care—unacceptable. In 1998, the Ontario child advocate estimated that 80% of youth in young offender facilities have mental health problems. In 1995, the Harris Conservatives eliminated funding for 64 community youth support programs serving young people between 15 and 20 years of age, all to pay for that tax cut.

Mr Kormos: How about support for victims under the Victims' Bill of Rights?

Mr Marchese: There are no supports for victims under the bill of rights.

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Mr Kormos: There are supposed to be.

Mr Marchese: The bill talks of rights of victims, any victim in Ontario, and there's the word "rights" in it and Judge Day said there are no rights.

Mr Kormos: There's no support for victims either.

Mr Marchese: There's no support for anybody in this province. Victims don't have support in this province. What we're playing here is placebo politics. I urge the public not to buy into this illusion that they're doing something. I urge you to urge this government for the hearings so that we can bring the proper evidence that is needed to undress, to exfoliate this smelly onion in the way that it should be.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today on the time allocation motion on Bill 55, the Parental Responsibility

Act. As a parent who has raised two children who have become successful adults, I take a great deal of interest and a great deal of pride in parental responsibility. It's always a pleasure to rise in this House and talk about an issue that is important to me and to the people of Simcoe North, and that is the issue of community safety. I feel that everyone in our province has the right to be safe from crime. As a province, we should be able to walk in our neighbourhoods, use public transit, live in our homes and send our children to school free from the fear of criminals. That is what our government is determined to create: safe communities.

So far, we have introduced a number of initiatives to achieve this goal, including: a code of conduct for students which gives teachers more authority in the classroom and on school property to discipline more effectively students who are not following the rules; our community policing partnership program, which will put 1,000 new front-line police officers on the streets of Ontario; our Safe Streets Act, which gives police more authority and options in dealing with aggressive panhandling and other intimidating behaviours; and the creation of child-friendly courts which provide specialized services to make courtrooms less intimidating for young victims and witnesses.

The Parental Responsibility Act is part of this government's plan to address the concerns of the people of Ontario regarding safety in our streets, our homes and our schools. This bill is a positive step in the right direction for helping to curb violence among our youth. I want to add that a stronger and bolder step is needed from the federal government in the form of significant changes to the Young Offenders Act.

Over the past few years, I've had the chance to talk to a number of police, the men and women in blue—or black as it is soon to be in the city of Toronto—who work countless hours protecting our homes and families from crime. I was amazed at the stories they told of youths thumbing their noses at the law because they were too young to go to jail. Young criminals could run around, commit almost any crime and in most cases get no real punishment for what they have done. It is clear that the young people of today who engage in criminal activity have no qualms about letting authorities know that they, the authorities, are powerless to stop them and punish them in any meaningful way.

It is sad when I learn that almost 20,000 cases of property crime were heard in youth courts in our province. It is reported that nearly 40% of all youth crime is based on some form of property damage. Obviously something needs to be done to reduce or eliminate this statistic. This bill is one way the provincial government can help. I hope the federal government, which has more jurisdiction in this field, can also do something to reduce this statistic.

When a crime is committed against one of our family, friends or neighbours, that crime is committed against all of us. We need to support victims, and this bill is one measure where victims can get some form of restitution.

People have often said that property crimes are victimless, since no personal injury has occurred. I believe that all victims of crime deserve justice. If a crime is committed against someone, why should victims bear the cost of property damage inflicted by someone else? Why should taxpayers assume the cost of vandalism to public property?

The purpose of the Parental Responsibility Act is to direct the financial responsibility where it belongs, to the parents. Parents, under normal circumstances, must be responsible for their children's actions. That does not mean that we are here to punish parents for incidents that are far beyond their control. There are many situations in which parents have done everything they can for their children, situations where parents can show that they have taken steps to properly monitor their children's activities and sought outside help where necessary or when damage is caused unintentionally.

In previous debates on this bill, I've heard the members opposite say that the Parental Responsibility Act is just a rehash of current laws. I don't believe this is true. Current law dictates parents have a duty to supervise their children and may be liable if they're negligent in this duty. However, the burden of proof is on the victims. They must show they suffered damage and the damage was related to the conduct of the parents. Victims must also show that the damage was reasonably foreseeable. All of this puts considerable burden on the victim. This government wants to make it easier for victims to get justice by simplifying this process.

Under this legislation, a victim would only have to prove that the child caused the property damage and establish the amount of the damages. Parents would either prove that the youth acted unintentionally or that they exercised reasonable supervision over the child. Parents could prove that they made reasonable efforts to prevent the child from causing the damage.

For property damages under \$6,000, this legislation has improved upon existing laws and a similar piece of legislation made in Manitoba in three ways. First of all, the victims do not need to prove that the young person acted intentionally. It would be presumed that the young person acted intentionally unless a parent could show otherwise. Second, parents must prove that they took reasonable efforts to prevent the damage from occurring. This isn't now specified in the Family Law Act. Third, victims would be able to use a Young Offenders Act disposition to help prove their case. This would make it easier for victims to use evidence to prove their case. All of these provisions make it simpler for victims of property crime to seek compensation in Small Claims Court.

It is sad, but some parents may have children with severe behavioural problems or who are too young to understand the consequences of their actions. They may have children who continue to misbehave after receiving counselling or treatment. This act would take all of this into account.

Parents who can prove that their children's actions were not intentional would not be held liable. The law

already recognizes that certain people are not capable, because of age or capacity, of forming the intention to cause harm. Every case would be judged individually by the court based on a number of considerations, based on the youth's age as to whether a parent had sought professional assistance for their child.

Most parents in Ontario are responsible and do their best to supervise their children properly. While the world is changing, the role of parents in teaching their children standards of behaviour has not changed. If passed, this legislation would reinforce those standards and expectations. It is commonly agreed that parents are responsible for their children. This legislation will be realistic about the challenges parents encounter.

I want to close on a different note. I want to say something about a very responsible family. I want to close by paying tribute to the families of the five young people who were killed in a collision on Highway 11 early Saturday morning. Particularly, when we speak of responsible parents, I want to thank and pay respect to the parents of 19-year-old Mark Johnson. Bryan and Judy Johnson are his parents. They have done an excellent job of raising their two sons, Jason and Mark. As well, they have acted as friends and mentors to many other young people in the community, including my own son, Andy. On behalf of the community of Oro-Medonte, I want to say how sorry we all are for the loss of their son Mark.

Thank you very much for this opportunity tonight.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I cannot tell you how very disappointed I am to stand in the House today to speak yet again to another closure motion. I really had no idea when I was elected in June—the image in my mind was that this would provide me with an opportunity to, on a very regular basis, bring forward in a meaningful way the issues of the people who have elected me, and yet again today we are here entertaining a motion to close debate on an important piece of legislation. It's certainly important for consideration, because the name of the act, the Parental Responsibility Act, would suggest to the people of Ontario that Ontario parents perhaps may not be responsible. I have to say that in my riding that would not be my experience.

1700

My husband and I have four children, and I think we have some sense of how important it is for parents to be responsible in the rearing of their children. In our roles, however, it has never been our practice to suggest to our children that if they act inappropriately, someone else would be held to account for their actions. I suggested—I believe it was last week—that there should be some consideration given to having young offenders held more accountable for their actions, possibly having their driver's licence withheld until such time as the young person was able to make restitution for the damage that he or she may have caused.

The member from Cambridge has indicated that there was significant provincial consultation on the issue at hand, but I would suggest that the consultation took place

some years prior to the introduction of this legislation. So my question is really, what kind of meaningful input could any participant provide on legislation prior to the drafting of the legislation? The member from Cambridge went on to list a litany of agencies and programs that would support families, to assist them in directing youngsters who may have some difficulties. But I have to say that in my very short experience as an MPP, I've been overwhelmed with the number of people who come to my office who would suggest they do not have the resources or the supports within their community to provide them with the assistance they need to help their youngsters.

I have to say that what I see very clearly with a motion to close debate—and I believe the people of Ontario are beginning to see this as well—is that the government is simply not willing to listen. I believe that all of us in this Legislature bring very valid issues to the floor for consideration and when the government brings forward a motion to close debate, what you are saying is: "We don't want to hear from you any more. We have all the answers ourselves." I don't believe that's the case. It has always been my practice in life, and I think my conduct in this House would demonstrate that—it's important to listen to what others have to say and to earnestly look for valuable points that might make legislation better and stronger.

The discussions that have occurred on this particular topic to date have brought forward many issues worth consideration, but what have we here today? We have a motion to stop debate. My question is, why? What are you afraid of? Why can you not be more flexible and understand that if we want to work together to bring in strong laws for the people of Ontario, we should all be willing to give and take? It's unfortunate that that is not my experience in this House to date.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I think most of us here bring the experience of our own lives to the debate. I just want to put on the record that as a married person, a father of five children, I know the role of a parent. It is sometimes daunting and sometimes overwhelming, but nonetheless we have the right and freedom to choose that role and we also have the responsibility to follow up on it and work with our children.

Far too much time has been spent here in a sort of negative vent, and I want to set the record straight. I think young people are the greatest asset. It's often said here that they are our collective future. I know as a parent of five children I'd like to go through and recognize that it does take a community to raise a family, raise a child. I would say that we live in a great riding. Durham is a riding that most people here listening would love to live in. Certainly they would have a very capable member of Parliament working for them in that respect.

My oldest boy is serving his country in the Armed Forces; he's stationed in Halifax. His name is Erin. He's engaged, so he's getting on in life. He's a captain on the Sea King helicopter and will be getting married this summer. He's partway through and he'll have his own

children to be responsible for. But as parents we're always responsible, forever. It never leaves us. They become part of your life and part of your responsibilities. But it's the joy of young people. Looking here at the pages who were introduced today, their parents must feel very proud. For you to have achieved this at your point in life—Lord knows, in 10 years you'll be standing here watching my grandchildren sitting there.

I think of the positive things. When I think of my daughter Rebecca, who's also married and lives in Australia—just a few short years ago she was a student at Carleton, working in a community situation as a volunteer. Their actions are very much encouraged by the role of the parents and other significant people in their community.

I have three children who are still at home, you might say, but the next daughter, the third one, Marnie, has just finished Western and she's actually practice-teaching right now in the Durham area. So she's just finishing teacher's college. She went to Lakehead University. The member, Mrs McLeod, would be proud to know that she has enjoyed her experience at Lakehead. She has been hired by the Durham separate board of education to teach high school next year. She's in her practice-teaching and she's working with young people. She, to me, is still my little daughter. I still think of her that way. But she's contributing in her community and I think it's that relationship that parents and their children—I'm proud of them and certainly there isn't one of them who hasn't had some challenge in life. They've had their bad days, as the parents certainly do as well.

The biggest challenge that remains with my five children is the two who are remaining at home. I might say that Andrew, the youngest boy, is writing his final exam today in his third year at Brock University. I know he's well represented by the member for St Catharines, Mr Bradley. I've told him, "If you ever have any problems provincially, call Mr Bradley," because I know he'd be there to help him through his challenges.

My other daughter, Rochelle, at the University of Windsor, just came home on the weekend. She's an excellent student and very involved in student government at the University of Windsor. She just completed her third year of commerce.

Mr Bradley: She joined the Liberal club.

Mr O'Toole: Actually, she's free to be a member of whichever club she chooses. I trust my children to have better judgment, though, and to be wise enough to pick the kind of responsibility imitating the role of their parents, which brings me right back full circle, looking at having rights, which young people today have and should have. But with that, I don't think anyone here disagrees that they also have responsibilities. It's that balance of rights and responsibilities that this is all about. As parents we cannot be exempted from this process.

I want to look at today's news. In preparation, I just took a couple of clippings from our daily clippings. These are today's headlines from the Toronto Star. In some ways it's quite startling. It's very disturbing in

some respects to read about these incidents in the press, in the media, that get all the attention and spoil it for all the other children whom I've just spoken about. It's not just my family. There is a need to remind people that society has a responsibility collectively, but there are also requirements for the parents to step up to it and not blame the school.

For instance, I'm looking here at the situation in Ottawa last week. We cannot blame the school. I commend the principal there for stepping in, and the other people who intervened to make sure that this situation didn't become worse than it was. I'm sure the parents, as I would be, must be grieved. But there is evidence, in reading through that article, that someone should have stepped up to that much earlier, rather than waiting for the event to happen. I think our court system, in the juvenile courts as well as the Young Offenders Act, without being partisan here, also fails to demonstrate the appropriate amount of leadership that says to young people, "For your actions there is a reaction."

That is what's missing here. What the Young Offenders Act says to people is, "There's no consequence for your actions." That's absolutely wrong. I don't like to intimidate people, but there are consequences for all of your actions. In fact, I believe in rewarding positive performance. I think the Liberal view has been that there's no consequence to your action until you have reached some age in life. That's absolutely not the case.

1710

We all heard on the weekend of a number of tragic events. I don't want to put names and faces to these tragic events, but I thought it was very strange last week as I was listening to the debate, on the very anniversary of the Taber high school in Lethbridge, Alberta, the very anniversary that we're talking about in the American high school where they had the tragedy—

Interjection: Columbine.

Mr O'Toole: Columbine, yes—and to think that there isn't some necessity for whoever the government of the day is to step up to that is a mistake. I think this parental responsibility thing is just one small piece of saying parents have a role.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): It's in the family law. It was put there in 1988.

Mr O'Toole: The member on the other side from Windsor is speaking. I can tell you right now that clearly the law today has not been used, so therefore the law is not particularly appropriate for the actions required. When you are responding to my comments, I'm sure you will bring that up to my attention.

All it says to me is that this bill sets up a process and a framework by which young people, and failing that their parents, are responsible for the damage and whatever else they have inflicted on other people. It sets up due process where the victims have their rights looked after.

In my riding in the last few months there have been a number of positive things that have happened. I want to mention Andrew Murphy. I've spoken about him in the House. He's a young teenager from Newcastle. On the

evening of his father's death he was actually involved in the rescue of a neighbour when he spotted their house on fire. There's an example of a young person who has a wonderfully bright future, who is willing to give back to the community.

I want to comment on the Venturers, the Boy Scouts of Canada from Port Perry, composed of 15- and 17-years-olds—Mr Speaker, you would be interested in this—a group started by Gary and Brenda Manns, who liaised with the Durham regional police and Chief Inspector Chuck Mercier and with Councillor Ken Gadsden from the Port Perry-Scugog council, working with these Venturers on a project. They are learning about community policing and about their role as young people, and they have been complimented by community leaders for their exemplary participation. This program, by the way, is also a national program involved with the RCMP and fire departments as well as the Durham regional police, and it's operating in Whitby and Uxbridge.

I also want to comment on the community working with young people and Ron Hooper and Ron Hope, who are both members of the business improvement areas in Bowmanville and Newcastle, as well as Garth Granger from the business improvement area in Port Perry. They have been working with their local councillors under Mayor Doug Moffatt as well as Mayor Diane Hamre to find ways of working with young people in youth drop-in centres, because children want to get out of the house and they need somewhere to go and things to do.

I could also comment on the Newcastle Ratepayers Association and their president Dave Rickard and past president Willie Woo and many others; Frank Hoare and others who have lobbied very hard with the Durham Regional Police dealing with youth and nuisance that was occurring in their community. Now they have a policeman walking on the beat. This is front-line community policing that's really working, and now the young people are actually stopping and talking to the police officer who is in the community. So these are success stories.

Last year I had a workshop at the Bowmanville Senior Public School which was coordinated by the principal, Fred Mandryk. We had a debate on the rights, respect and responsibility issue, the theme now running through some of the code-of-conduct issues in our schools. I can tell you that we had excellent representation from the student body, Greg Koenderman, as well as the municipal police force, Staff Sergeant Ted Dion, as well as a parent adviser, Don Lucas Astley, and they were all calling for the same thing: clear direction so that the children knew what the rules were going into the game.

I also want to say in my last couple of minutes left here that last week, as this debate was going on, I had the privilege of attending the Blue Heron division of the Pathfinders of Clarington and Durham. There were some 37 young women who received their citizenship award, and I was so impressed with the decorum and the maturity of these young people that I know our future is in good hands. I was pleased, along with the federal member of Parliament, to present them with recognition

certificates and pins to recognize this achievement in their guiding principles. I, just for the record, want to mention a few names. Erin Ashton, Jennifer Dugan, Elizabeth Salisbury, Rebecca Townsend, Sian Evans, Jennifer Feltham, Jenna Hossack, just to name a few, were all young people that I would be pleased to call my children. In this case, their parents were there watching them receive these awards, so it's that supportive role we're trying to say here.

In all cases, we should be very careful when we're critical of all young people and generalizing it. That's the danger of this debate. I'd like to leave on a positive note by saying most of the young people, if not all, that I've run up against are great young people looking for great leadership and vision, and with the right sense of direction and supports, which will include primarily the family, those young people will have a future in which I believe they can make a contribution, as each of us in this House tries to do.

With that, I'm pleased to save the rest of my time for the member from Oshawa.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I very much appreciate the opportunity to rise today. I'm going to start off by saying a few things that I've said in the past, but I'd like to say them again. I think one of the things that we have to do and we must emphasize is that we must look to the future through the eyes of the children of today, because it is their world that we're trying to make better.

The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke made a very enlightening speech and I wish he had had the opportunity to complete that; however, last week it went off in some areas that I wish we had the opportunity to discuss, but because of time limitations I won't be able to get into that.

I believe the intention of the legislation is necessary and good. However, I do have some concerns with the judiciary and the process, and in some aspects I have some concerns that the judiciary may interpret rather than administer the laws. What I'm referring to is that in life there's no such thing as a 10, you know? There's not the perfect parent, although we try, and believe me, there are not the perfect kids, although they can be very trying. There's not the perfect spouse—I'm not the perfect spouse—although we try. The reality is that people are doing the best they can in the situations they're in. People just do the best they can.

The legislation is very effective and necessary; however, I have concerns about the due diligence that may be found in the legislation. What I'm referring to is that people may now be required to keep all those photo albums, all those bank books. My two sons—Josh is four and Garrett's three. We had them out to the ball game on Saturday. That's an attempt not only to enjoy and be with our kids but to bring them up in a fashion that we like to see them in society.

What happens is that some aspects in life—maybe something goes wrong; they're in with the wrong gang, wrong place, wrong time. There could be all kinds of situations. I'm sure many of the people in this Legislature

today have stories they may not wish to be discussed; however, the reality is that sometimes you're in the wrong place at the wrong time. Well, due diligence would then have to be proven in those cases, and I have a bit of concern about which way they go with that, Mr Kormos.

1720

Interjection.

Mr Ouellette: Mr Kormos is very familiar with the judiciary.

Now, the member is asking, "Which direction?" If something happens and goes wrong, Mr Kormos, how do you prove that you've taken all the steps necessary to be where you're going? So—

Interjection.

Mr Ouellette: Yes. But there are those extremes in society as well. Society also plays a very important role in the upbringing of a child, and certainly we've heard on many occasions that you don't bring up a child, society brings up a child. So what happens when a school, for example, may be occupying—in an average day a child may go to school for the majority of the day. Where's the time allocated in the amount of diligence required by the schools?

I have people coming into my office where the parents were trying to ensure that the child did his homework and were trying to set some pretty strict rules because they refused to do their homework; they didn't want to participate in school. What happened was that the child went to the school and the school informed them—of course, I'm only hearing one side of the story—"If you don't like the rules at home, then we can ensure that you receive benefits and be on welfare outside of the house." What does that say about society and who has a responsibility in that area? Quite possibly other sectors of society should have some influence or some responsibility then. We have to make sure that we give the parents the authority to do what is required in the upbringing of the child.

Granted—I've said it before and I'll say it again—the majority of parents out there are attempting and doing the best they can, but the reality is that there's no such thing as a 10 in life.

What about the cases where—and I've heard of individuals, I personally know individuals—parents were called and had reports done because the children were banned from watching TV for two weeks? Children's aid was called in. They had to fill out a report because the neighbours didn't think that was right. Where's the responsibility? We have to ensure that parents in these situations have the authority to do what is necessary.

As well—but don't get me wrong—the one thing I'd like to say is that there are those parents, and I've heard them, I've actually heard a parent say: "Well, it's not that bad. He only stole a car. It's not as if he murdered someone." I think it is extremely necessary for those individuals out there who have the mentality that, "He only stole a car. He didn't murder anyone. Why should we worry about it?" that some responsibility is allocated to those

parents. In that sense I fully and completely agree that the law is necessary.

We all try and do the best we can. However, as I said before, there's no such thing as a 10 in life. We are not the perfect parents, although we're trying. They're not the perfect children, although they can be very trying. The reality is that the legislation is necessary for the mindsets of individuals out there who believe: "He only stole a car. He didn't murder anyone."

As well, I'd remember and I'd ask everyone to remember to look to the future through the eyes of the children of today, because those are where the decisions have to be made. We've had our world, we're working on our world now and we're making it better for the future.

Mr Bradley: I must say, just to comment on the previous speech, that I like the fact that the member for Oshawa was not reading from a script written by Guy Giorno in this particular case. It sounded as though these were genuinely his thoughts on it; that's refreshing to see. I was glad to see that he was prepared to express some concerns about the bill. My problem with the time allocation motion is that it doesn't allow enough time for individual members of the Legislature to express those concerns, or indeed to have others express them in a committee.

That's the problem. If the Premier had brought the House back, say, in March or February, we would have a situation where a bill like this—if he had brought it back in January, he could have had perhaps a six-week recess sometime where the bills could go out for public hearings. They could go to various communities in the province, get some input on the bills, try to make them even better pieces of legislation, because as the member for Oshawa pointed out, there are always going to be some concerns about certain aspects of the bill.

I am not a lawyer but I've listened as people in this House tell me that this bill is even weaker than that which exists on the books today. The member for Niagara Centre is a lawyer. The member for Trinity-Spadina, who listens to lawyers, and others—the member for St Paul's—I've heard all these people say, "Look, what we've got now is more powerful than this, and this may actually provide defence lawyers with more ammunition to use in court." That's why I am concerned about this. When it comes to matters of law and order, some of my colleagues in the Liberal caucus refer to me as Attila, or something along that line. I do have some strong views on issues of law and order, but I want to know what is most effective.

Also, the component that's missing is prevention. I'm not saying all the preventive measure in the world can make certain that we don't have criminals out there or people who are at least on the wrong side of the law, but a lot of the preventive programs are very good. They are a good investment early on, and when the government cut several of those programs early in its first mandate, I think it made a drastic error.

It's interesting to hear reverse onus mentioned. The member for Cambridge talked about reverse onus. It's nice to see this government now believes in reverse onus in this particular bill, because it didn't. The Conservative Party did not when we dealt with the spills bill, which was an amendment to the Environmental Protection Act. It passed in 1979, when Ted Arnott was the executive assistant to Mr Johnson, or was thinking about being the executive assistant in those days.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): It was 1989.

Mr Bradley: It was 1979, so he was probably thinking about it as a child in those days. Here was a bill that put the onus on polluters to act first and squabble in the courts later, and that reverse onus was not good enough for the government because it never did proclaim the bill that passed in the Legislature in a minority Parliament. It took a Liberal government under David Peterson to proclaim that legislation, to put it into effect, because of course in that case it would have disturbed the huge polluters who contributed so much to the coffers of the Progressive Conservative Party. That determines, to a very significant extent, the kind of legislation that we see coming forward from this government.

No question, hearings would be beneficial. I think you can't go wrong with hearings in the province. I mean genuine hearings where you've got members of all political parties sitting at the table listening to people—experts and people who may not be so expert—put forward their point of view and perhaps suggest some amendments to the legislation, or perhaps suggest the government might withdraw the bill if indeed it is, as some of the legal people in this House say, weaker than that which exists at the present time.

I know the government has a very light agenda; we've seen very little legislation. They brought in an extraneous and useless motion simply to hammer the federal government over the head and debated that for several days in this Legislature, when in fact the member from Wellington—I can never remember all the ridings so I always say Waterloo and Wellington and places like that—anyway, when everybody was prepared to accept and endorse Ted Arnott's particular motion in the House, which didn't have any of the particular rhetoric in it, which simply stated what he believed to be the facts and what we would like to see for the province. Instead, we spent about six or seven or eight days on this motion, which was totally political. It showed that the government had no agenda. You could have spent that time on this bill and trying to strengthen it or, as I say, removing it if it's indeed weaker than other bills.

I'm wondering how Charlton Heston would feel about this bill. Charlton Heston appears to be a hero of the Conservative Party. I have been here long enough to remember when the Conservatives used to invite Charlton Heston to their fundraisers. It wasn't just the National Rifle Association branch in Canada that invited him; the Conservative Party used to invite him. I was watching Ben-Hur on the weekend. The movie was on television and I saw Charlton Heston there. I didn't see any guns at

that time; they got along without guns in that particular era. But I am concerned. I don't know if you've checked with Charlton Heston on this to determine whether or not this is a strong enough bill for him.

1730

Do you know what I forgot to mention? Because we're talking about a time allocation motion, I thought we might be spending some time instead in the House this afternoon with the Premier proudly announcing the purchase of two new turboprop jet engine planes; nicely appointed inside, I must say, all the luxuries. The members here who are not in the cabinet should know that these airplanes are for the comfort and convenience of members of the cabinet and the Premier himself. The Minister of Health has never been in one, but she knows some of her colleagues have. Once in a while, if you're really good, they'll let one of the backbenchers get in the plane with the Premier and chit-chat with him. This is \$11 million for new aircraft.

I'm awaiting a telephone call from the Taxpayers Coalition. I know my friend Frank Sheehan, who headed up the Taxpayers Coalition in the Niagara region, when he isn't phoning me to complain about government advertising—he hasn't yet—or the purchase of the new jet—the whole Taxpayers Coalition will be in full revolt. Because heaven forbid those people who believe that the National Citizens' Coalition and the Taxpayers Coalition are simply a front for the provincial Conservative Party and the national Reform Party or whatever their new name is.

I've never believed that myself. I know that they will be complaining loudly and publicly about the squandering of millions of dollars on government advertising and, of course, the purchase of the new planes for the comfort and convenience of the Premier, members of the cabinet and senior members of staff. Who knows, Guy Giorno and the gang, the whiz kids, may get to go on the planes as well.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Most of them will not, you're quite right.

Here is my surprise. There was a long weekend coming up. This was the Easter weekend, a four-day weekend for members of the Legislature: Good Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Easter Monday. At about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, I was in the press gallery lounge looking for what you people put out the last day before a long weekend.

Lo and behold, I found this little, wee announcement of the planes. They didn't put it in the boxes for the media. There wasn't a government flack going around putting it in each of the offices of the media. It was being hidden. It must've been there to cover the next press release I saw, which was on the Ontario Realty Corp. It had gotten worse. That came out at 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

I expected that we were going to see the Premier get up in the House to proudly talk about his two new airplanes this afternoon. I was disappointed. If one of you

asks for unanimous consent tomorrow, I'll be happy to try to persuade my colleagues to give unanimous consent for the Premier to get up and talk about all the luxuries contained in the new \$11-million airplanes that have been purchased by the government for the comfort and convenience of the cabinet. I wouldn't actually have remembered that had not a Conservative member reminded me to mention that this afternoon. I won't say who, because the person will either not get into the cabinet or no longer be in the cabinet, whoever she or he might be. I'm going to keep that very clear.

Now, this time allocation motion fits in with the whole government agenda of an assault on democracy in Ontario. How does that happen? First of all, just don't bring the House into session until very late. I hear lectures on when teachers should be in classrooms in school and so on. This House is always coming back late. It would be like saying to the teachers: "You're not coming back in September. We're going to come back in middle, late October." Then in May, "You don't come back in the holidays, you come back sometime in April."

This House never sits because the government does not want to be accountable to the vociferous opposition and the assiduous members of the press gallery who are always here every day up in the gallery watching what's happening from question period on till the House stops. All the cameras, as you can see, are all there right now. They're not just here for photo ops of members putting sweaters on; they are people who are interested in very significant issues.

How else does your government attack democracy? You changed the Election Finances Act. That means that the wealthiest people in this province, to whom you cater in your legislation and regulations and policies, can now give even more money to the Conservative Party and your Conservative Party can spend more money in campaigns. You will be the biggest fundraising machine there is. As I've said on many occasions in this House, there will be a building boom in Ontario because they'll be adding rooms to have the Tory fundraisers.

In St Catharines they had one—sold out, 200 bucks a plate, everybody was there. A lot of public money was there, and I object to that but I won't get into that. I object to publicly funded institutions putting money into the Conservative coffers. But I'll get to that another day.

Then you changed the election rules. You made it 28 days. Whom does that favour? The government, or the party that has a lot of money—because we in the other parties run our campaigns on door-knocking, getting to the people individually—just blankets the ridings and the province with not only government advertising, but of course Tory advertising.

You have government advertising itself, which is first of all a squandering of taxpayers' dollars that will be denounced by the Taxpayers' Coalition, but also is very unfair because those who are in opposition to the government's position don't have the same money.

You notice that Ralph Klein right now in Alberta, although he's not imposing closure—because of the

uproar in the province over his legislation designed to begin a system of private health care in Alberta, two-tiered health care, which you'd like to emulate here, no doubt—he is using government advertising to put forward the government's position.

I'm waiting to read the editorials in all the newspapers, including the *National Post*, denouncing the spending of millions of dollars on those editorials. Only TVO will probably talk about it. Others will not talk about it, the people who are getting the dough. The cranky talk-show hosts are silent on government advertising. The newspaper editorialists—nowhere to be found on this. The radio, television—everybody who gets the money tends to be quiet. I think it's because they're writing about so many other things. It can't be because they're getting the money.

The last thing that you've done of course, other than buy the new jet for the comfort and convenience of the Premier and members of the senior cabinet, is that you have also changed the procedural rules of this Legislature to silence members such as myself, who would like to speak for yet another hour on this motion or at least have time to canvass the various issues contained within the legislation in this House. I denounce the government for this and for its entire attack on the democratic system in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: I just want to use the few minutes that I have available to set the record straight in terms of exactly how we got to this point, because I have a funny feeling that following this session this afternoon the spin doctors will begin their work.

First of all, as has been mentioned by earlier speakers, there's not a lot going on here. Every bill is important to one degree or another in terms of some constituency within the province or some community. But in terms of the length of time this government kept us out of the House, the time that they had to develop important legislation, when we look at the health care crisis that exists in all our communities, the education crisis, the social services crisis, the environmental abuse crisis that continues, all the things that quite frankly this government wants to avoid, because if they didn't create the problem certainly their legislation and their policies have exacerbated those situations, none of that's in front of the House. Nothing of that kind of heft is in front of the House.

When the government House leader approached me, as the NDP House leader, with this notion of two days' hearings, which was their original offer, I said that wasn't enough, again in the context that there's not a terrific amount of crisis legislation in front of us here. I might say parenthetically that one of the reasons for this is probably that they want to keep everything quiet for the ramp up to their budget announcement where they can announce something that actually happened a year ago, which is the balancing of the budget, and then they're going to take all the credit for it and probably never acknowledge the fact that it's being driven by the US

economy, specifically the auto industry. However, we'll save that debate for another day.

Also, they want to keep the waters nice and calm because there's a by-election going on. While the results of that won't tip the balance of power in any way, it's very symbolic for this government. Given how they stiffed Toni Skarica and left him out there twisting in the wind and the fact that they would love to have their chosen Tory candidate as a member of this caucus in a big way, one could believe that they want to keep things nice and quiet.

1740

The third thing that folds into all that is that just like today, where democracy is being denied, we will probably see a flurry of important legislation that will be rammed through this House in the final weeks of this session, going into the summer. Of course their game plan is, "Yes, people will be outraged and riled up for a couple of weeks, but once people get into the summer and start thinking about vacation and being with their family, it won't seem like a big deal and they'll let it go." I have to say, as disappointed as I am to admit it, it is relatively effective. It's a shame, it ought not to be, but it is. People do go on with their lives, and they're driven by issues that matter to them and their families, which, as I would remind the Speaker, are the very issues I just mentioned that this government doesn't want to deal with in terms of this place.

So a couple of weeks of explosion, opposition is upset, screaming, "Democracy is being denied," maybe a few interest groups—at least that's the way they'll be labeled by the government—off into the summer and there you go. So there are lots of reasons why it's by design that we don't have much going on here. So we felt perfectly in order and within our rights, but in a reasonable fashion, to say to the government, "No, two days isn't enough." My colleague our justice critic, the member from Niagara Centre, has spent hours and hours and hours on this issue, both in this House and out in the communities, speaking on an incredible range of people and groups who have an interest in this bill, and he wants to be their voice. That is, I would remind members of the government back benches, in large part why we're here: to give voice to our specific communities and to give voice to opposing points of view from that of the government.

So, what outrageous position did the NDP take? Wow, we asked for a whole five days, which amounts to a few hours every day—four days actually, if you think about it as a week, but the number was five, so it would take us into a second parliamentary week—because we have people who want to come in and speak to this issue. Our critic has more than adequately laid out for this government why those issues are important to us and why there are other points of view and why we need to scratch beyond just some of the bumper-sticker sloganism that we've heard here today and at other times during the debate.

The government House leader responded to me and said, "No, it's two days or nothing." No backup, no

rationale, no argument that we haven't made our case, just flat out, "No, it's two days or nothing." I responded to him that our position is that it's either five days or no, we're not going to agree to any other kind of package that might move this legislation through. We are not asking for anything unreasonable. The government, of course, having the majority control of this place, ultimately decides, whether based on pressure, their game plan, strategies, whatever ultimately moves them, decide by virtue of their unilateral power that they have with a majority.

So here we are, left with one afternoon, trying to make the case both why we think there are problems with this bill, why it doesn't do what it says, trying to give voice to those people who have a right to be heard on this issue, and arguing why it's so undemocratic to shut down debate, and all of that ends within probably the next seven or eight minutes. It is so outrageous, particularly when we look at your record that you like to trot out as being something you're so proud of. We've already addressed the fact that Justice Day came forward and said, "There are no rights in the Victims' Bill of Rights that you passed."

We actually had in this province Mike Harris's Attorney General directing the staff, the lawyers on behalf of the government, to go into court and argue that the people who were in front of the court didn't have any rights as victims, after the government stood up and said: "We're giving all these rights. We're making sure that victims have this protection and that voice and this service." None of it was true. You sent government lawyers in to argue that people didn't have the very rights your government stood up and said they have. Your own candidate in Wentworth-Burlington, Priscilla de Villiers, a well-respected individual in terms of victims' rights, has said you're wrong on that issue, that there aren't any real rights there. For that matter, she's also opposed to your position on gun control. Her position is consistent with ours and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, who have said that this is important public safety legislation.

So there is a story and a side to this argument that needs to be heard, and it's not going to happen. But you know, the real losers in this are the public, because the public will be denied the opportunity to hear an opposing point of view in a parliamentary system with a sitting majority government. It's not that far from the power of a majority government to the tyranny of a majority government. You keep taking us not only to that line but over the line, and today represents another case. This is bad law-making, this is democracy denied, and at some point this government will be held accountable.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Unfortunately, I only have a few seconds. Hopefully I can come back to this subject again. My friends on the opposite side, from Hamilton West and from St Catharines, have spoken. If I didn't keep a close eye on the agenda I would have forgotten by now what they are talking about, because the member for St

Catharines was talking about airplanes that the government needed and bought. That is not what the subject is. The agenda is Bill 55, the Parental Responsibility Act. One of my friends from Stoney Creek said the other day, in a nutshell, "Do you know where your children are?"

The Acting Speaker: The time for debate has expired.

Mr Turnbull has moved government motion number 39. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Call in the members. It will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1748 to 1758.

The Acting Speaker: Will members please take their seats.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne

Hardeman, Ernie
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
Molinari, Tina R.

Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Snobelen, John
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tilson, David

DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gill, Raminder

Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al

Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Caplan, David
Christopherson, David

Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Crozier, Bruce
Curling, Alvin
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Hoy, Pat

Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Ramsay, David
Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 48; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 6 of the clock, we will adjourn this House until 6:45 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguee aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)		
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement		
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Broadview-Greenwood	Churley, Marilyn (ND)		
Bruce-Grey	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wetlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carleton-Gloucester	Coburn, Brian (PC)		
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)		
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Com- mercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)		
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)		
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
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Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
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Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		
Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
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Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
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Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
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Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Wentworth-Burlington	Vacant
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Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 25 April 2000

Mardi 25 avril 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 25 April 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 25 avril 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

DIRECT DEMOCRACY THROUGH MUNICIPAL REFERENDUMS ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA DÉMOCRATIE DIRECTE PAR VOIE DE RÉFÉRENDUM MUNICIPAL

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 20, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 62, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in order to encourage direct democracy through municipal referendums, to provide additional tools to assist restructuring municipalities and to deal with other municipal matters / *Projet de loi 62, Loi édictant, modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois en vue d'encourager la démocratie directe au moyen de référendums municipaux, de fournir des outils supplémentaires pour aider les municipalités restructurées et de traiter d'autres questions municipales.*

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Due to extenuating circumstances, Mr Conway can't be here. He has 10 minutes left. I'd ask for unanimous consent to allow Mr Bradley, the member for St Catharines, to finish his time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): What it does is, just to show the government how it does you a favour, cut seven minutes off a speech I would have given. You see, I normally would have had 20 minutes. I knew that would gain favour with the government. Actually I had to think a long time about it, whether this was a good thing to do or not, and I thought it probably was because you never know when a closure motion's going to come in and there may not be further debate. Anyway, I appreciate the opportunity to talk on what they refer to as direct democracy through municipal referendums.

I was reading, as I know some of you like to read, John Sewell. John Sewell had a very interesting column on this, and John is often right on these matters. He was talking about what he saw with this particular piece of legislation. I remember, I must say, that the Minister of Municipal Affairs said he would do this at the time. He said he was going to remove what we call the Henry VIII clause, a very arbitrary clause that gave the government virtually all power and the Legislature no power. In other

words, in order to accomplish any of the amalgamations, any of the megacities, it was going to mean that the government could ignore all other laws or override all other laws of the province in order to do so, and some of us in the opposition brought this up.

I notice I don't have Andrew Sancton's book here. Maybe if my staff person is watching, they could bring in the book by Andrew Sancton.

I'm pleased about one thing. You don't like complimenting the government too often, but the Minister of Municipal Affairs has indicated, I think quite clearly—he will correct me if I'm wrong—that he's not about to go in at this point in time and impose a so-called solution in the amalgamation discussions in Niagara. At least that's what I have heard him say. I don't want to ever misquote him. The member for Erie-Lincoln agrees with me on that. That is a positive move on his part. I know he has not been badgered into doing so by the editorial board of the St Catharines Standard, which of course is promoting a unicity. As you would know, all major newspapers everywhere support unicities.

Remember when the debate was going on in Toronto? The National Post, your newspaper, wasn't publishing at the time, but you had the Toronto Sun, the Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star, and all three editorial boards were pushing for a unicity. That's usually what happens in any area. The major newspapers in the area, which would like to wipe out the other newspapers or amalgamate the other newspapers, want to have one big city. The position of the editorial board of the St Catharines Standard is very clear on that. But there's much dissent within Niagara over what any solution might be.

I personally believe that a simple realignment of responsibilities is the solution. We all want to strive for efficiencies; I think everybody has that goal. My concern is that we would not have an imposed solution, particularly a unicity.

Dr Andrew Sancton of the University of Western Ontario has published a book called *Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government*, in which he describes—in this case his examples are mostly what happened in Quebec. By the way, the Bouchard government is now attempting to force amalgamations and unicities in that province. Dr Sancton really discounts a lot of the arguments that are made in favour of unicities. That doesn't mean, where there is consent and a lot of consensus, that that may not happen.

If you look at where we are today in Ottawa, for instance, the Liberal members for Ottawa and the Con-

servative members for Ottawa, generally speaking, are in favour of a unicity concept there. If I were living in Ottawa, I wouldn't be, I suppose. But they are, and they know the area. Windsor-Essex is under some similar pressures. I happen to believe, as the old Tories did in the days of the Davis administration, that there is a lot of virtue in good local government, in the local units, and you don't want to lose that.

Andrew Sancton's book is coming in at the present time, delivered by the member for Essex. It's not a prop. I want you to know it's not a prop. It's called *Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government*, Andrew Sancton. It is published by Price-Patterson Ltd, Westmount, Quebec, Canada, an excellent book. I recommend it to all members of the Legislature, particularly those who are under threat of some kind of forced amalgamation or a megacity.

What he does is talk about the fact that, first of all, there aren't savings to be derived from a megacity. Second, he talks about the fact that you need not speak as one voice to get something. I remember reading a professor from Brock University who wrote a letter to the editor when you didn't give Brock University money on the first round of BILD funding. I still call it BILD; I'm living in the past with that. What do you call it?

Interjection: SuperBuild.

Mr Bradley: SuperBuild funding. They didn't get the money, so his rationale was, "If only we were one big city, we would have had the money from the provincial government," when in fact the provincial government was looking at criteria and indicated at the time that it did not fit the criteria. I know the government is still looking at funding for colleges and universities and that, under different criteria that may be applied to a different program, it may be that Brock University and Niagara College will continue—the Minister of Economic Development and Trade in fact made an announcement concerning Niagara College. I am confident that the government will have the wisdom to flow the funds to Brock University and to Niagara College, if not under the SuperBuild program, under a different program.

But this professor wrote a letter to the editor saying, "If only we were one big city, we would have gotten the money." Well, I didn't think Guelph was one big megacity, and it received money. St Clair College in Windsor is not in one big megacity; it received money. The community college in the Peterborough area received money under the SuperBuild program. It's not one big city, and so on.

It's interesting how many people try to use the argument that we must speak as one voice. Sancton, in his book *Merger Mania*, discounts that as being necessary. I don't think, for instance, that the provincial government, despite some Conservatives who seem to think that, discriminates against the Niagara Peninsula simply because it's not a megacity. I think the provincial government and the federal government look at areas and say, "What are the needs? What are the programs? What are

the criteria?" and then apply those criteria. I really dismiss that.

Third, he said you can't have the municipalities competing with one another. I look at a place like Boston, and it has dozens of municipalities that are part of greater Boston, or Los Angeles or San Francisco, or a lot of cities in the United States, and that doesn't bother them. In fact, I'm told some people in the business field kind of like the competition. They like to see competition between municipalities seeking to have them locate in their area.

Fourth, I, contrary to many on the government side, and perhaps the Minister of Municipal Affairs in this case, do not agree that fewer politicians are always the better solution. I think that really means less accountability, I think that really means less access, and what I fear is, with a huge megacity, the only people in the Niagara region, if I were speaking of that, who would be able to afford to run are people of some means financially to run. That's too bad, because I think if we look at our councils in various areas, it's a pretty good cross-section of the community. Unless you have to spend a lot of money, particularly when it's done on a ward basis, you've got a good cross-section. I don't always agree with everything, for instance, that everybody on my own city council says, but I'm glad to see that cross-section of the community represented.

So all of us who represent areas that haven't been megamerged yet should think very carefully before we allow that to happen. Where there's a regional government, it has assumed certain responsibilities. Sometimes you alter those. In our area, waste management has gone to the region. That makes sense to me. I might not have said that 20 years ago. I would say it does make sense today. Roads are coming back to the municipalities. Now, if there were some money coming back to the municipalities with the roads, not just from the province but from the region, to the local municipality, I would be happy to do that.

Interjection:

Mr Bradley: Your roads. I'd be happy to see that. That's what makes sense. Or if there are some voluntary amalgamations that want to take place between municipalities or inter-municipal agreements, all well and good, but let's try to keep those local communities. I reject the fact that people will say, "Well, if you have one big megacity everybody will remember they're part of Collingwood" or something. They won't remember that as easily as if you have a city or a town there with its own jurisdiction.

In this particular bill with referendums, my concern is how the referendums are worded. Look, I want to be honest and up front with the government. I understand why you are concerned sometimes when certain questions are put on the ballot. Any provincial government is going to be. But I kind of like the idea, even though I would be annoyed at them sometimes in government if they did this, if a local municipality puts a question on a ballot. I am very worried when, first of all,

the Minister of Municipal Affairs, or at least the provincial government, has to approve the question on a ballot, or that the province can come in and superimpose a question on a ballot of its own volition. I would be concerned about that. I'd like to see that flexibility.

It reminds me—you weren't in municipal affairs, Tony, at the time—of when the tax bills went out and your government wouldn't let them put the information on the tax bill, but the real responsibility for the increase in taxes was because of the provincial government. Now, I'm confident that the same municipalities would put information on the bill if taxes went down saying: "Thank you to the provincial government. The taxes went down."

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: It doesn't work that way? I thought it would. I really thought it would. So I'm concerned about that. That's why when I look at local democracy, I say that's a concern.

Now, I don't expect they're going to put on the ballot the question: "Do you think that Mike Harris should buy two new airplanes for the government?"

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Jets, sorry. The Minister of Natural Resources was busy with some work in his office this afternoon and may not have heard this, but I was explaining why these were jets. They're jet propulsion engines. Turboprops have those. So when I hear that, I call them a jet. I must say to the government members that I don't think it would be appropriate for a municipality to put on the ballot: "Do you believe that the Mike Harris government should spend \$11 million on a nicely appointed, luxurious turboprop jet—two of them—for the comfort and convenience of the Premier and the cabinet? Do you agree with that?" I think that would be an inappropriate question to put on a ballot.

So I can feel sympathetic to the Minister of Municipal Affairs if that happens, but generally speaking I like some of the questions they put on. We had one on garbage set-out service at one time that said: "Do you want garbage set-out service—it costs this much—or do you not want it?" People voted overwhelmingly in favour of retaining it, and city council took it away. So it was an indicator at the very least. I do worry about that.

I'm happy to see some of the Henry VIII clauses disappear, but I'm informed by my colleagues that if you get the magnifying glass out, you'll find some others.

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The Acting Speaker: Comments or questions?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): As always, the member from St Catharines is thoughtful, entertaining, provoking and has years of experience—never boring, never, ever boring. I just want to add to some of the issues that he has raised.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Why aren't you out flying around instead of heckling us in here, Minister?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): They're not going to be delivered till June 1.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, his planes won't be delivered until June 1. I won't give attribution to the honourable member across the way.

I just wanted to mention that within Bill 62, one of the things that's missing is a final determination around Flamborough, whether or not Flamborough is in the new city of Hamilton. I was meeting with Jessica Brennan, our NDP candidate in the by-election, and we disagree on the issue. She happens to believe that Flamborough ought to be released to go to these various other municipalities. I've always believed and maintained that the original boundaries of Hamilton-Wentworth as a region that we've known since 1974 should be the boundaries that create the new city of Hamilton, and that includes Flamborough. The only reason there's an option out there is because the government, foolishly in this case, was trying to buy off Toni Skarica to prevent him from doing what he ultimately did, which was resign over the fact that he believed that the government misled the people of his riding during the last general election.

But both of us, Jessica and I, agree that a decision needs to be made, and not after the by-election, which would be oh, so convenient, but now, so that local democracy can be served and candidates can make determinations on whether or not they're going to run. How on earth can we make plans for a new city when we don't even know what the broad boundaries of the city are going to be? The municipal election is in November, for goodness' sake. Minister, include a decision around Flamborough in Bill 62 and let us get on with local democracy in the new great city of Hamilton.

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I'm pleased to make a few comments on what my colleague from St Catharines has said. In our part of Ontario we've had some amalgamations already, where the county system has dropped down to six municipalities, but they're very worried too that they have a hard time meeting with the provincial government to understand the new system. I know they're worried about the highways that are left, the ones that haven't been downloaded on to the municipality. The provincial highways are in dire need of repairs, and they're having a lot of problems getting the answers on these highways. I guess they would like to meet with ministers to get the SuperBuild fund to understand that a little better.

In our part of Ontario the municipality has had to close some bridges because they didn't have the money available, which you used to get under supplementary funding from the province, to build bridges. They've had to close the bridges because they didn't have the money to repair them. I feel a little bit sorry about what has happened in Ontario. I come from a municipal background and have been for 15 years. I know a municipal councillor who is available seven days a week, 24 hours a day to try to solve the problems in these big megacities, and what this government is proposing to the residents of our part of Ontario, that same opportunity won't be available to them. I just hope that the government would be more accessible. If they got new programs that are

supposed to work, I wish they'd explain them to the municipal politicians and the school board trustees, because they're at a loss and they cannot find the answers.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell) : C'est toujours intéressant d'entendre les commentaires de mon collègue de St Catharines. Mais une chose qu'il ne faut pas oublier, c'est que toute personne qui s'attend d'avoir des réductions d'impôts fonciers lorsque nous avons des fusions de municipalités se trompe beaucoup. Si nous regardons ici dans la grande ville de Toronto, les économies ne sont pas ce que nous attendions. Il faut dire que le gouvernement actuel, lorsqu'il dit qu'il a investi au-delà de 900 \$ millions dans les réparations ou la construction de routes, avait des revenus d'au-delà de 3,7 \$ milliards, donc une économie que le gouvernement a gonflé. Il a gonflé ses revenus par au-delà de 2,6 \$ milliards.

Mais lorsque nous regardons le fait du référendum, encore une fois, la semaine dernière, nous avons bel et bien mentionné que moins de 50 personnes participent ou pratiquent leur droit de vote lors des journées de scrutin aux élections municipales.

Si je regarde mon collègue de Carleton-Gloucester, on nous disait que pendant la dernière élection, au-delà de 29 % seulement des gens avaient pratiqué leur droit de vote. Mais si je regarde les économies qu'on nous disait avoir, que nous aurions avec le transfert de toutes les responsabilités, je ne m'en doute pas, parce que dans la région de la circonscription de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, nous allons avoir un manque à gagner d'au-delà de 26 \$ millions.

The Acting Speaker: Further comments or questions? If none, response.

Mr Bradley: I thank all of the members who have made a contribution in response to my address today. I thank the members of the assembly for their unanimous consent to complete the remarks of Mr Conway. I do recommend something that I thought, if we had more time, we would have talked about as a Legislature, and that is, John Sewell's Local Self-Government Bulletin. This is number 6, April 2000. It deals with this bill. It talks about this bill and this issue.

It includes: "Tighter straitjackets for Ontario municipalities"; "Lessons from an amalgamated Toronto"; "The transition period involves extraordinary confusion"; "Amalgamation results in decreased services to the public"; "User fees were increased"; "Harmonization is very expensive and very difficult to achieve"; "Most councillors refuse to speak out"; and the last part, (g), is "Suggestions for citizens." One of the suggestions is that they subscribe to this newsletter, which I think is a very good suggestion.

It says: "This bulletin has been sent to about 900 individuals involved directly and indirectly in local government in Canada. We invite you to subscribe by going to the 'Bulletin' tab of the Web site <http://www.localselfgovt.org>." You can tell that I am always at my computer dealing with these matters. That's what the address is.

I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will want to get this right away. In fact, if his staff wants to get it, because it was difficult the way I read it to get it, they may do so.

I'm glad that Flamborough was mentioned, because I too would like to know before the by-election what's going to happen to Flamborough. It will be very, very interesting to hear.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I am enjoying the opportunity to engage in the debate on Bill 62, the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, 2000, and thank my honourable colleagues on the other side for setting up the debate for this evening. I'm sure there's a little bit of confusion with our viewing audience about the content of this bill. It is not about forms of aerial propulsion. It's not about Flamborough in particular. It's not about roads. It's not about the road network in the counties and regions of our great province. It is certainly about some incidental changes that the honourable member from St Catharines did a good job of explaining to this House.

But it also is primarily, from my perspective, about direct democracy, about greater accountability at the local level. This is not the be-all and the end-all. Anyone who has heard me talk about this issue would know that I will not be completely satisfied until we have forms of citizens' initiatives, both provincially and locally, that allow for that kind of accountability. It should not be just when politicians decide to present an issue to the people; it should be when the people decide as well. This is one more step in the process that gets us closer to that goal. Certainly it's a personal goal of mine. I'm not saying it's a goal of this government at this particular stage in time, but this is certainly the next step in fulfilling the commitment that this government did make on more accountable government in Ontario.

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It is not, I should say for the record, a new idea, because referendums have been part of our political culture here in Ontario, both provincially and locally, for decades. We've also had national referendums at times of great debate. Who can be a student of national history without knowing about conscription referendums? Certainly we went through this whole process with respect to the Charlottetown accords as well, in more recent time. So referendums are part of our political culture. They're not alien to what we do here in the province or in the country when it comes to parliamentary representation or democracy.

Indeed, the current Premier of the province of Ontario, Mike Harris, has been advocating the greater use of direct democracy quite consistently since at least 1990. It was in 1996 that the Premier and myself, as parliamentary assistant to the Premier at that time, were able to introduce a white paper on referendums called *Your Ontario, Your Choice*, that was issued in August 1996. It then went to a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly. Perhaps the honourable member

remembers the very fulsome debate that occurred for six months of my life at that particular moment in time where a certain member of the Liberal caucus had a lot to say for days and days and days of debate.

Mr Bradley: That was the member for Windsor-Sandwich.

Hon Mr Clement: That's right. How could I forget?

We eventually were able to produce some recommendations to this Legislature with respect to the issue of direct democracy in 1997, which was called The Final Report on Referenda. Then, fast-forwarding a little bit, it was in March and April of 1998 that I was able, on behalf of the government as a project leader for direct democracy, to visit 26 communities throughout Ontario, including Ottawa. Windsor was visited; I remember that very well. Niagara Falls was a spot; in fact we had a town hall meeting in a library and I learned by visiting it that the cornerstone was laid by my stepfather when he was the MPP, so for me personally that was a moment that I did enjoy. London and Thunder Bay were other locations where we did have these discussions. We had over 1,000 people participate directly by coming out on the tour and making their views known in person. We also had a number of e-mails and phone calls; thousands of people visited either the Web sites or participated in faxes or letters.

Mr Bradley: Did you go to the casino?

Hon Mr Clement: No, I didn't visit the casino, actually, the honourable member should know; it's not something I do with my time.

All of that work did not go to waste. Last fall, the first component of direct democracy was introduced in this Legislature when we introduced and passed the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, which does protect Ontario families from irresponsible government spending that results in deficits and accumulated debt. So now we need voter approval before introducing a new tax, before raising rates on a wide variety of taxes, including personal income tax, corporate taxes, the provincial sales tax, employer health tax, gasoline and fuel taxes, and education property tax. We know on this side of the House that tax cuts create jobs. That is something that has been close to our soul as a government since we were first elected in 1995, and this bill, this act that I refer to, the taxpayer protection act, enshrines the idea that the voters should have a say on the taxes that affect them. We're now protected that way.

Now we have the next stage of this through the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, 2000, which will build on that momentum that we created through the taxpayer protection act and give voters a greater say in local issues, local decisions.

This legislation provides the necessary framework for the municipal questions and I believe improves direct democracy by indicating, through credibility, why these referendum results should be followed by the local government, because in order to make something binding, it has to be credible. That's the precondition. There is no point in going through a process and making

it binding on the municipal politicians, or indeed making it in any way that public policy should have regard to, unless the process is a credible process. This legislation seeks to accomplish that.

Questions must be within the matters of the jurisdiction of the municipality. If the municipality is putting it on the ballot, it has to have the ability to enforce through a bylaw, through a policy change, through a direction to its staff. The municipality has to have the ability of effecting the result of the legislation. The honourable members opposite ask, "Well, how do we know what a local issue is?" A local issue is anything that a municipality could pass a bylaw on, anything a municipality can pass a policy on, anything a municipality can direct staff to do. It's quite simple actually.

The question also must be phrased in a way that can get a result in answer to a yes-or-no question. The question must be clear and concise, the language has to be unbiased and there is a requirement that there be full and accurate disclosure to the electors of the impacts of implementing or not implementing the proposals, including the financial impacts.

We should say this as well for the record: The results of the questions cannot deny other rights that are accumulated by individuals or otherwise, they don't deny a right to appeal a council action to the courts of Ontario or to quasi-judicial tribunals and there has to be a process of appeal to the chief election officer of Ontario in order for this process to be credible as well.

So if there is a question about the wording of a referendum question—because the wording, as we know through our national debates, is so important to the credibility of the end result—or any controversy about the wording, any elector can challenge the wording of the question within 20 days of being notified of its content. The municipalities would be required to send the appeals filed with them to the chief election officer of Ontario, not to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—thank goodness it's him, not me—within 15 days. That way we have a clear and credible process to ensure the question is a clear question, is a concise question, is a question capable of a yes-or-no answer, is a question that leads to a credible result. That is so important.

I want to talk about some of the past history, because of course referendums are not something new to the municipal ballot. But what we want to do is get to a point where they are seen as credible in all cases—because there have been some credible referendums in the past, no doubt about it—to ensure that this is a building block for more accountability and more direct democracy.

In the last municipal election, 1997, there were about 70 municipalities that did put questions on the ballot. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario did a survey on the sorts of questions they asked. A few were about issues they could actually take action on. These were the ones that we had the most interest in, because they build the credibility of the process. They are on such issues as mosquito control, the name of a municipality, recreation issues and water supply issues.

East Gwillimbury, if I can give you an example, asked a clear, concise yes-or-no question with the cost attached. They said, "Do you want the town to continue its mosquito control program at a cost of approximately \$145,000 per year (\$19 average cost per property)?" A very clear, very concise question. People had a direct say on not only a public policy issue, but an issue that involved their own pocketbooks.

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The city of Hamilton asked a yes-or-no question about whether it should pass a bylaw making public places and workplaces smoke-free, a perfectly legitimate and acceptable question. These are examples of questions municipalities can actually act on, which means the result is credible. But a great many questions were about issues on which the municipality—we can argue about whether this is right or fair or just—had no authority or power to act. This only leads, when these sorts of questions are put on the ballot, to voter frustration and voter confusion, and it detracts from the whole credibility and legitimacy of the exercise. It's also a waste of taxpayer time and money.

I want to talk a little bit about the 50% turnout issue, because I know that has been raised by my friends on the other side. There have been some concerns raised that the 50% turnout that is required for a municipal question to be binding is somehow too onerous. I will admit to you that this is a high threshold, but again it goes to credibility. I believe, and indeed the experiences in other jurisdictions bear this out, that if an issue is important it can galvanize the electorate and it can lead to increased voter turnout, which benefits the entire system. It not only benefits the actual question that the voters are getting an opportunity to have an opinion on, but it also obviously helps increase the turnout, incidentally, for the local council races or the mayoralty race or whatnot.

Let me quote Walter Robinson of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. He said the following: "Given the threshold required for referendums to be binding, this can only serve to increase voter turnout." I agree with that. It makes common sense to think of it that way. I also agree with this statement: "Anything that we can do to produce a greater turnout at the polls makes for stronger democracy." That was said by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty. I agree with him on that point as well.

There has been some editorial comment that I would like the opportunity to put on the record as well, because I think it shows a general flavour of how this is being perceived in our communities. Nanticoke Mayor Rita Kalmbach said in the *Guelph Mercury*: "It's a positive initiative, especially if you have an item that impacts greatly on the community. Sometimes some issues are so important that the voices around the council table simply aren't enough. You have to ask the entire community." I agree with her on that point.

Another quote from an editorial in the *Simcoe Reformer*, April 18: "One can thus see this process creating subtle pressure in favour of greater participation,

a welcome change from the apathy that normally accompanies municipal campaigns. With more people casting ballots on issues concerning their neighbourhood, chances are more votes will be cast for council candidates, giving them something resembling a majority mandate for a change."

The Brantford Expositor: "An attempt to clarify and codify the rules for municipal referendums would be a vast improvement over what exists now, which is essentially nothing. Over the years, municipalities have held referendums on everything from Sunday shopping to nuclear disarmament, but even after the votes are held, no one is ever quite clear what they mean."

On this side of the House, we have consistently expressed our commitment to promoting ways and means in which the local government can work effectively for their voters to be more accountable to the wishes of the voters and to be more responsive to the wishes of the voters. This is what makes local government more credible and legitimate. Yes, we have credible and legitimate local governments, but we need to do more. We in this House need to do more.

In fact, I heard the honourable Leader of the Opposition not two weeks ago at a public event, which I was fortunate enough to attend as well, talking about the need for politics and government, at whatever level, to reconnect with the voters, to reconnect especially to our young people. The only way to do that, the only way to re-legitimize the process, is to give those people, either at the municipal level or the provincial level or indeed the national level, more say in the decisions that affect them in their daily lives, and that means not only in this place. This place of course has a history and a tradition and it is so critically important to our notions of parliamentary democracy—but it also means sometimes—not every day of the week or every week of the month or every month of the year, or indeed every year, but sometimes—giving the people a direct say on the issues that affect them. Is that so subversive? Is that so wrong?

The mother of all parliaments, in Westminster, has had three referendums to date in Prime Minister Tony Blair's short term. If it can happen in Britain, surely it can happen in Canada, surely it can happen in Ontario. In Australia last year they had a very important referendum on the question of the future of the crown which was very actively participated in by a great majority of Australians. This is a process that dovetails in with parliamentary democracy; it does not detract from it.

But we have a responsibility, not only on this side of the House but all of you—if I can point; I don't mean to be impolite—on that side of the House as well. All of us together as parliamentarians have that responsibility to rebuild the credibility and legitimacy of political activity. If we fail to do that, perhaps we can still pat ourselves on the back on all that we do for our party and all that we do for our caucus, we can pat ourselves on the back at the end of the day, but as parliamentarians we have a higher responsibility—I believe we do—and part of that is

rebuilding the legitimacy and credibility of political activity. That is why this bill means so much to me.

Is it the answer for everything? No, it's not; it's another step on the way. It's a process issue, it's not a substance issue, I know that, but we have to build the processes that are going to be important not only to present generations but to future generations as well. I believe this bill deserves the support not only of the government side but of the opposition benches as well for that very reason. I look forward to working with them so that we can build that credibility and legitimacy not only at the provincial level, which is our day-to-day task and responsibility, but also at the local level, for the betterment of the citizenry here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I certainly listened intently to the speech given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I was disappointed to hear that the minister had nothing further to add to the situation with regard to Flamborough. If we remember when the decision was made by the government to amalgamate Hamilton, the minister at that time, attempting to appease Toni Skarica and to throw Mr Skarica a carrot so he wouldn't quit because of your betrayal of his community, promised that Flamborough and Waterdown would have the option of deciding whether they wanted to stay as part of the city of Hamilton or look at other parts of adjacent municipalities.

The good people of Flamborough, led by Mayor McMeekin, went through a very democratic process, exactly what the minister is talking about tonight. Given that choice by the provincial government, they decided overwhelmingly that they did not want to be part of the region and they made agreements with other municipalities to do so. Again, it was not something they came up with on their own. They were given that choice by this government. We were disappointed to hear the announcement last week where the minister said, "I don't quite have the answers yet for Flamborough." We were disappointed to hear that the Tory candidate in that riding doesn't have a stand yet on Flamborough. Some of us, cynical as we may be, believe that the government is delaying making a decision on Flamborough until after the by-election is over, that they're afraid to tell the good people of Flamborough where they stand.

Let me tell you very clearly that Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus believe that once the government gave the people of Flamborough the option and the choice to democratically decide their future, this government—it's in the spirit of what you have talked about tonight—has no choice but to abide by the wishes of the people of Flamborough, and you have not done that. You haven't done it tonight, you didn't do it two weeks ago and, I would suspect, you're not going to do that until after the by-election because you're afraid of the answer. I believe you're going to say no to the people of Flamborough against their wishes, and you gave them that choice. So if you want to talk about real democracy, Minister, stand up in your place and tell us tonight what you're going to do

with the choice made by the people of Flamborough to leave the city of Hamilton.

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Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I'd just like to say that I think the member for Brampton West-Mississauga, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, gave an excellent speech. I think we should all support him, and I know we will. I know this will be a unanimous decision.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I also listened intently. When we talk about direct democracy, we believe in direct democracy, but this government doesn't believe in direct democracy. The direct democracy that the minister is talking about is the one imposed by the province, because the plebiscite that was held here in the greater Toronto area not long ago regarding the megacity was disregarded. You talk a good line when it comes to direct democracy, but when people actually tell you what you do not want to hear, then you don't do it.

You also stated that municipalities shouldn't be allowed to run deficits. You know that legislatively municipalities cannot run deficits, yet you insist that this legislation will hold them more accountable, when by law they're already held accountable to a higher standard than I would dare say the province is held to.

You talk about more say at the local level, about what affects people, yet you don't give people a direct say when it isn't what you want to hear. Again, Flamborough is an example. That is not what you want to hear. You are imposing, under this legislation, that if it's not of interest to the province, then it can't be stated in their referendum question. You ultimately have a veto on the referendum question.

Again, it sounds good, but the credibility just isn't there.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): To the minister in his comments in regard to the referendum legislation part of it, I just have to say that I'm a little bit surprised. The minister, Mr Clement, from which riding name I don't remember, brings forward this legislation and says: "Look at the wonderful thing I'm doing. I used to be the former president of the party"—this particular individual was, of the Tories, and really was very strong on the whole idea of bringing forward referendum legislation. He was going to give individuals within communities of Ontario the power to make decisions and to hold their councils accountable and to make sure the decisions were according to the will of the people.

It's a funny thing; on the road to government, what happened is that somehow or other the principles dropped by the wayside, because when you read the legislation, there's no power. There's absolutely nothing in this that gives people anything more—I would actually argue less than what they have now under referendum abilities that people have through their municipal councils.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs is the very minister who is going to have the right to determine if a

referendum question should go ahead in a municipality, based on, if it's a provincial matter, yes or no. Imagine that. The former president of the Ontario PC Party, who was in favour as a Reform-type individual within the Ontario provincial PCs, who campaigned on the issue within his own party of giving people more direct say in referenda and direct control when it comes to democracy, comes here as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and brings this legislation that, quite frankly, is a farce. There's nothing in this legislation that gives individuals any more rights than they've got now. I would argue, and I will submit later in my debate, that it actually gives you fewer rights than you have at this point.

This is another one of these cases where the Tories try to get the five-second press opportunity. They got it. They bring in the legislation, but in the end people are not going to have any more than they had before.

The Acting Speaker: Response.

Hon Mr Clement: Thank you to my colleagues from Hamilton East, Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, Sarnia-Lambton and Timmins-James Bay for participating in this discussion. I do want to make a couple of assurances for the record.

The whole essence of why this piece of legislation gives more power to the people is by virtue of the fact that there is a process by which the referendum results can be binding on the council not to do something for a three-year period if it is voted down or to do something within a reasonable period of time if it is voted in favour of. I think that is a very critical element of this which was not there before and, again, is a building block of credibility at the local municipal scene.

The honourable members are upset that there can be a declaration of provincial interest. Again, I say to the honourable members, if it's something that the municipality can pass a bylaw on, can pass a policy on, can direct local staff to do, that's a local issue, but there are occasions where municipalities, maybe through lack of foresight or through confusion, sometimes delve into things that are overtly and exclusively provincial matters of jurisdiction. We have the right to protect the provincial interest, because that's what we are elected to do by the people of Ontario.

Interjection: That's our responsibility.

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member is quite correct: It's not only a right; it's a responsibility and a duty to protect the provincial interest, and we make no apologies for that.

The honourable member for Sarnia-Lambton mentioned the issue of the Toronto referendums or plebiscites. I said this before, and I will be consistent in what I say: Those referendums or plebiscites were walking advertisements for why we need some rules in place. Who is spending the money? Is there a transparency of monetary contribution to referendums? How are the ballots distributed? How is the question constructed? Those are the kinds of issues that this legislation seeks to answer for the betterment of democracy in Ontario.

Mr Bradley: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: In the generous spirit that we have in this House tonight, I'd like to allow the minister another minute so he can tell us what he thinks should happen in Flamborough.

Interjection: No.

Mr Bradley: Your own members are denying you the time.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. Further debate?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I'm glad that the minister has been able to speak tonight. I'd also mention I'm going to be splitting my time with the member from Sarnia, the member from Hastings and the member from Timiskaming.

I just want to mention that I'm sure his Reform friends are very disappointed in this act. It is a really weak, feeble attempt to say, "Well, we did something," when they know they didn't do anything; in fact, what they've done in this act is weaken the ability of citizens and mayors and councillors in local municipalities to have plebiscites or referendums. They have weakened it; in fact, they have strengthened the hand of the provincial government.

This government is very paranoid about people locally saying anything critical about this government. As the member from St Catharines said, they went to the extent in the last Legislature of even passing into law a prohibition for municipalities to write their own tax bills. The tax bills issued by local municipalities had to be OK'd by the minister word for word, because they were so afraid that municipalities, after the downloading fiasco, were putting lines on their tax bills saying that part of the tax increase was due to provincial government downloading. They got so upset by those tax bills coming out with that information on them that they passed legislation prohibiting municipalities from writing their own tax notices.

This is a continuation of that. It's an attempt to muzzle people who disagree with them, whether it be local citizens' groups or local councils and mayors. This is really about muzzling democracy; it doesn't in any way enhance direct or any other form of democracy.

The key line in this whole piece of legislation is in part III, section 28 of the bill, which is adding section 8.1 to the act. The provincial government makes the rules, and they say, "(2)2. Despite rule 1, it"—that is, the question—"shall not concern a matter which has been prescribed by the minister as a matter of provincial interest."

1940

In other words, the minister decides what the rules are, what is allowable, what the provincial interest is and what it isn't. He can determine that. Do you think this minister is going to allow a question in the town of Aurora about the Oak Ridges moraine? Never in a million years, because he will say it's a provincial interest, that it doesn't have anything to do with the town of Aurora. Do you think he will allow the town of

Caledon to have a referendum question on protecting the Oak Ridges moraine?

Mr Bradley: No.

Mr Colle: Never in a million years. This act gives the minister the power to decide what the question should be and then make sure that basically everything is protected as far as the provincial government is concerned, that their interests are protected—politically, that is.

They also have this incredibly stupid threshold, which is not workable. It's a dream that 50% have to vote. If you look at the last election, in the minister's own city of Brampton only 23.25% voted. They're going to have to double the turnout in the next provincial election to give people a say. The minister knows that historically voter turnout is quite low municipally. If you get a 50% threshold—in the ones I've looked at, about the only cities that would probably have had an allowable question that would have been acceptable under this legislation would be Timmins, which had 55%, and the city of Toronto, which had 51%. Look at Mississauga, 20%; Hamilton, 34%; Gloucester, 28%; Ottawa, 26%. None of them would have been able to have a question that had any meaning, because they didn't reach this unattainable 50% threshold, which again is part of the way this government shuts off any opposition or any questions they might find embarrassing. Having that impossible 50% turnout regulation is something that stops direct participation.

There were a number of questions on the Toronto ballot last time, and they had a 51% turnout. For instance, there was the question: "Are you in favour of opening a casino in the city of Toronto?" Seventy-seven per cent in Toronto said no. What did this government do? They put a casino with slot machines at the Woodbine racetrack. Do you know how they did that? By ministerial order. So whether or not you agree with the casino being good or bad, 77.8% of the people of Toronto said they didn't want the casino. The government said, "We don't care what you said in the question"—51% even voted—"we are going to put in that backdoor casino at Woodbine by ministerial order." That was one question.

Here's another question: "Are you in favour of deferring property tax assessments until the provincial government has released tax impact studies and provided an opportunity for public hearings?" Are you in favour of that information coming out? That was among the questions in Toronto. Eighty-three per cent said, yes, they wanted to defer it until they had the impact studies. What did this government do? They said, "No, you can't have the tax impact information."

Here's what it's all about. It's about making sure these types of embarrassing questions don't get asked. That's what this legislation is about. It is saying: "We want to control what the question would be. We will decide the wording and you, the local cities and towns, are basically allowed to go through the motions." That's about it. It diminishes their ability to really have any say.

The minister was on his feet talking about voter approval and building blocks. We know that this

government has systematically, without asking, destroyed and wiped out local municipalities like no other government in the history of this province. When they were asked, like in Toronto, where people were asked whether they wanted to be part of the megacity and 76% voted that they didn't want to be part of it, this government said: "No, we didn't like the wording. We didn't like the result. We didn't like that referendum question. We are still going to do what we think is right."

They have a proven track record on referendums. They have a proven track record on denying local democracy in a real, grassroots sense. This act further reinforces provincial power in the minister's hands. That's what it does. If the minister was really listening to communities and listening to what people want, he might put a referendum question across the greater Toronto region about whether they want the Oak Ridges moraine protected. I challenge him to put that on the ballot in the next municipal election. Let it come out as a provincial question in those 26 communities across the moraine that are interested in protecting their water in the Oak Ridges moraine. That's the challenge.

If the minister is so democratic and he wants to reinforce that voter approval, I challenge him to put the question on the ballot, "Do you want to protect the Oak Ridges moraine with a comprehensive plan?" Put that question on the ballot. I challenge him to do that.

They're afraid to do that, because they know that the people from all across the moraine—from Rice Lake to the Otonabee River, to Pigeon River, the Scugog River to Lake Scugog, to Pefferlaw Brook, to Black River, to the Holland River, to the Nottawasaga River, to the Credit River, to the Etobicoke Creek, the Humber River, the Don River, the Rouge River, Duffin Creek, Bowmanville Creek, the Ganaraska River, the Cobourg Brook—all these people who live along these rivers and waterways would emphatically say to the minister: "We want the moraine protected. We don't want the Ontario Municipal Board to decide the future of our waterways. We want it to be decided by the citizens and their council."

Right now, Minister, when you talk about local democracy, I'll tell you what has happened. In Richmond Hill, on April 6, there was a great expression of local democracy. There were over 500 people at a meeting in Richmond Hill. The council had the public meeting and they asked for people to make deputations, and person after person made a deputation that night, on April 6. They said they wanted no development on the sensitive areas of the moraine. Almost 100% of the people there said that: no development on this environmentally sensitive area. The council passed a resolution supporting the people, which said they would not support the development application on the moraine.

That was local democracy at work. But you know what happened? Because of the way things are now in this province, ordinary people and councils cannot have any protection when they make a decision, because the decision of Richmond Hill council, the decision of those people that night, is overruled by developers skipping

over the local council and going to the Ontario Municipal Board. So the Ontario Municipal Board, which is unelected—it's appointed—faceless, nameless people, will decide the fate of that development application. That is not democratic. It is not fair. It is not direct. It is a sham of democracy.

Everybody in Richmond Hill that night was saying: "You know, our council doesn't want the development. We don't want it." Yet who's going to decide? A couple of faceless people at the Ontario Municipal Board. That's what is really angering people across the greater Toronto region: Their democratically elected councils have no power on important issues like zoning and planning. They have lost that power because now the developers use their huge war chests to win the battle at the Ontario Municipal Board, which has been called basically a rubber stamp for developers. That is what is angering people across the moraine. That is what is angering all these people who care about the water, wildlife and things that are green and sustainable. That is democracy.

The minister wouldn't dare put that to a ballot question in any way, shape or form, because the minister decides what the question would be. He'd be afraid of that question being there. If Scugog had that question, would he allow it on the ballot? I bet you not. If the 26 municipalities got together with a uniform question on the moraine, the minister, I'm sure, would not allow it because he has the final say. That's why I think this is a very cynical piece of legislation that does nothing to enhance anybody's right to be heard.

As you know, Minister, your attempt here is to say that this is about making sure there are better rules. I think what it does is say, "We are going to make sure the province sets the rules and the provincial rules are the ones that override the local rules."

The other thing about this piece of legislation is that there are issues where it's quite questionable whether they're under provincial or municipal jurisdiction. You take the issue of downloading of things like ambulance services, the downloading of public transit on to local municipalities. Let's say a local municipality wanted to have a question on whether they're in favour of a service being downloaded, like public transit, on the local property tax. The minister could very easily say, "No, you can't have that question because downloading and the transferring of this power locally is a provincial jurisdiction." He would not allow that, because in essence they have the control.

1950

It's ironic too that this government is very quick to criticize the federal government. They spend millions of dollars in television ads attacking the upper level of government. They think it's a great thing because they've got the money, and they spend the millions on these ads attacking the federal government. On the other hand, if you've got these local municipalities that may want to criticize them, well, they can't do it. So here what's good for them, attacking the feds—they won't allow

themselves to be criticized. So there's a double standard here.

Another thing that's missing in this legislation is that the questions have to be basically the by-product of a council. There is no allowance for citizen-initiated referendum questions. In other words, if there were 10,000 people in Sault Ste Marie who wanted to have a question on the ballot in Sault Ste Marie, those 10,000 people, if they petition the council, petition the minister, cannot have that question on the ballot unless council puts it on. There are no citizen-initiated questions. Therefore, citizens are not allowed to directly put questions on municipal ballots. No matter how many citizens there are, they are not allowed in this legislation. So it shuts citizen-initiated ballots out. That has been the tradition of a lot of referendum legislation throughout the western world. It's citizen-initiated legislation. It comes up from the grass roots. Citizens really feel strongly about something.

As I said, the perfect example right now is that citizens feel so strongly about the devastation of the Oak Ridges moraine. They overwhelmingly want something done, but they cannot get that question on the ballot. Even if you had 100,000 or 200,000—and I'm sure we could get that. We could probably get hundreds of thousands of people who would petition this government to put the question on the ballot, but the minister would deny it, because this government has decided they don't want to listen to citizens on difficult issues like the Oak Ridges moraine. They'd rather listen to the development industry, which wants to develop at any cost, to the detriment of a fragile ecological masterpiece.

There's a lot of frustration, again, through the province of Ontario. People feel that no one is really listening to them, especially at Queen's Park. They feel at every turn that people are running roughshod over their local decisions. If you look at today's clippings, there was a councillor, a Clive Doucet from the Capital ward in Ottawa-Carleton, who wrote an interesting article, "Take Back the Cities."

His letter was in the *Globe and Mail* today. He said: "I'm also tired of fighting like hell to get a tiny light-rail project going that, in total, will cost \$16 million while the province spends \$71 million on a four-lane highway to Arnprior. I'm tired of hearing the feds and the province play blame the other guy and dump it down to cities to deal with. I'm tired of being held hostage" He goes on to say: "I'm tired of seeing us"—that is, the city of Ottawa—"send a ton of taxes each year to Queen's Park and have only a fraction return. I'm tired of electing provincial members of Parliament who never go to work because the Legislature never sits. In 1999, the provincial Legislature sat a total of 41 days. Who needs it?"

Clive Doucet said: "What we need is our cities back, to be able to run our own schools again on our own tax base. We need to get rid of those monster hospitals with their monster bureaucratic salaries and monster servicing requirements. We need to go back to what we had

before—small hospitals that were community and cost friendly.

"It is clear the provincial government is not interested in cities—except as a cash cow to pave roads for the good folks that voted for them in the 905 area."

This is what this councillor in Ottawa is saying. I think this councillor in Ottawa is typical of a lot of ordinary citizens across this province who, in recent years, have seen a government that basically has decided that bigger is better. If you take a look at the examples of what they've done in Ottawa, in Hamilton, in Toronto, they are creating these monster bureaucratic entities, which makes for less democratic input. If you look at the history of Ontario, you will see that the real democratic activity occurs in local town, village and city councils. That's where there is give and take, there are questions, there is public participation. As you know, what has happened is that a lot of these local councils have disappeared, and then, with this kind of legislation, they are given even less power to deal with questions that the citizenry may want to comment on.

I also want to put on the record here a press release that came out from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. This is the association that represents 95% of Ontario's population. They represent over 300 cities, towns, villages and counties in Ontario. Here's what their reaction was to this very half-hearted attempt to cover their political derrière here in this legislation. It's dated April 13, 2000. This is the AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, release.

"In response to Minister Clement's introduction of municipal referendum legislation, AMO president Michael Power said, 'Credibility, accountability and consistency and the wise use of taxpayers' dollars cannot be achieved by this legislation.'"

Here is the representative of all these cities and towns, 95% of the population of Ontario, saying that this legislation has no credibility, and it really doesn't. If you talk to people who have been advocates of referendum legislation, people who have been advocates of local democracy, they feel that this piece of legislation is a really feeble, in fact cynical attack on direct democracy.

Mr Power from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario goes on to say: "Credibility, accountability and consistency and the wise use of taxpayers' dollars cannot be achieved by this legislation if we cannot clarify for the public and ourselves what is within the municipal jurisdiction. If this is to be done on a case-by-case basis as the minister has stated, then there will be greater confusion and frustration for the public and the two orders of government."

I think AMO makes a very good point. You see, these questions in this piece of legislation will be decided on a case-by-case basis of what is provincial and municipal jurisdiction. So it depends on what the minister's mood of the day is or what the political flavour of the month is at the time. They will decide whether they will accept a question or not. You can't have this uncertainty. You need guidelines that apply across the board.

"AMO has asked the province to not proceed with this legislation until the credibility and value of the province-wide referendum legislation is proven." In other words, they're saying, "Don't proceed with this very transparent, political piece of legislation." Don't proceed.

"Municipal government leads all orders of government in terms of direct access, openness and accountability. At the municipal level, public consultation is carried out as good practice."

That is what AMO says, and AMO represents, again, the majority of local governments across Ontario and, as I said, 95% of the people. They are saying emphatically that this legislation has no credibility.

You wonder where they're getting the impetus for this kind of legislation. There are so many important things the minister could be doing. He could be saying, "I will do my job and have a comprehensive plan for the Oak Ridges moraine," because that is what the 465 scientists said, and that is what all the cities, towns and regions across the moraine are saying. They're saying, "Minister of Municipal Affairs, your number one job on the agenda as minister is to protect the fragile water and greenbelts north of Toronto that go from the plains of Rice Lake all the way to Peel region." They're saying, "Minister, that's job number one."

2000

The minister is avoiding that job. As we speak, he is allowing the Oak Ridges moraine to be carved up by this ad hoc process at the Ontario Municipal Board. The Ontario Municipal Board has now filled the vacuum, because there is no provincial policy on the Oak Ridges moraine. This is the same government that had the time to put in provincial policy and ministerial statements about the Woodbine casino, but the minister has no provincial policy on protecting the Oak Ridges moraine, which is basically the source of drinking water for about five million people. No policy, no time for legislation.

If the minister wants to hear from people about how strongly they feel about communities like Scugog and Caledon, he should, as I said, go to these communities and ask them if they want a question in the upcoming municipal elections. That would be the best thing to do. We've got municipal elections coming up this year in November. The minister should ask the citizenry in communities like Palgrave, Pickering, Cobourg and Richmond Hill, "Would you like a question on the municipal ballot about whether we should protect the Oak Ridges moraine with a comprehensive provincial plan?" That would be a true test of whether the minister is just playing around with political semantics by putting forth this bill, or whether he really wants to hear and get voter approval. I think it's a perfect litmus test for this minister's long-time asserted commitment to this type of legislation.

I don't deny the minister the fact that he's been interested in this issue. He has a track record on that and has spoken on it over the last number of years. I think that issue has been burning inside him for a long time, and I accept that. He has that track record. The only thing

is that I'm sure the minister is very disappointed with this piece of legislation. Either he couldn't put into the legislation what he wanted, or it was politically expedient, basically, to pretend he was doing something. I don't know which one it is. I do think the minister has had an interest in this type of democratic approach, and putting questions on the ballot is a democratic approach.

I know the minister talked about: "We had to tighten up the rules. Sometimes they ask ridiculous questions." Well, democracy is very sloppy. It's got a lot of loose ends. People sometimes want crazy questions on the municipal ballot. Sometimes what we think is crazy goes on a municipal ballot. But in the long run I think it's better to give people the opportunity to be heard. If 100,000 people in Mississauga want to put a question on the ballot, and they think that question should be on the ballot, whether it be about nuclear disarmament or about gas-fired plants out at the energy plant or about toll roads—whatever it may be—if people want to put those questions on the ballot, let them put those questions on the ballot. I really don't know what the minister is afraid of. Is he afraid that people are going to say, "We don't want any more toll roads." At least you have a good expression of public opinion.

Right now, with this piece of legislation, it is basically impossible to have any say on these issues. You cannot express so many issues that might be very important in one community and might not be important in another community. What this does is hamstringing local councils and local groups from speaking out on an issue. As I said, turnouts are not going to improve. Historically in this province, turnouts have been in the mid-30s and sometimes up to 45%. Occasionally you come up to the 50% plateau. I found two that did in the last election. But when you come up to that plateau, it is usually not because of a referendum question; it is usually if there's a hotly contested mayoral debate.

In Toronto last time we had a real dogfight for the office of mayor, and it brought out a lot of voters. It was quite unusual. In Mississauga, for instance, nobody challenged Hazel McCallion. I don't care what you did last election in Mississauga, you couldn't have got a 50% turnout, so it didn't matter what question you put on the ballot.

In this legislation the really controversial question won't be there; it will be the questions about whether you want to put playground equipment in the playground, whether you want to build another ice rink. You're not going to get a 50% turnout about local issues of that nature, unless it's a rare occasion. History tells us that. I don't see how this bill in any way, shape or form enhances direct democracy or improves it. In fact, it diminishes it. It gives the minister more control and it has got an unrealistic and impossible threshold of 50% that just will not fly.

In conclusion, I challenge the minister. If he were really interested in direct democracy in this province, I would ask him, by ministerial order, to show that he cares about the Oak Ridges moraine or, not doing that, to

put a question on the ballot in all the upcoming municipal elections in November—it's easy to do—in all the 26 cities across the Oak Ridges moraine about whether you want to protect the moraine. I would even let him word the question, because he's got that power. So put the question about the moraine in the November election in the 26 municipalities. I would love to see that.

Ms Di Cocco: I am pleased to speak to Bill 62, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in order to encourage direct democracy through municipal referendums, to provide additional tools to assist restructuring municipalities and to deal with other municipal matters, because it speaks to direct democracy.

One of the first comments by the minister when he spoke to this bill suggested that he took out the Henry VIII clauses. I asked for a definition of a Henry VIII clause and I also asked to get some background. I have found that the Henry VIII clause is the popular name for a clause in a statute which gives the government the power to pass a regulation which overrides or alters the terms of the statute itself. So we're going to direct democracy by putting in a Henry VIII clause. Such a clause attracts the nickname of King Henry VIII because the 16th-century monarch gave himself the power to legislate by proclamation a power historically associated with executive autocracy. Henry VIII clauses are traditionally regarded in parliamentary democracies as undesirable because they empower the cabinet to pass regulations behind closed doors which override statutes passed by the democratically elected Legislature, and that's the premise of this discussion.

In the words of the Ontario Court (General Division), "This power is constitutionally suspect because it confers upon the government the unprotected authority to pull itself up by its own legal bootstraps and override arbitrarily, with no further advice from the Legislative Assembly and no right to be heard by those who may be adversely affected by the change, the very legislative instrument from which the government derives this authority."

I want to begin on that premise, that we have enacted legislation and inserted a Henry VIII clause, and then we want to talk about direct democracy.

2010

On April 13th the Minister of Municipal Affairs introduced Bill 62, the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, 2000, in the Legislature. This bill contains a number of Henry VIII clauses. Again, we start from that premise, and therefore the credibility of the whole discussion of direct democracy, in my humble estimation, comes into question.

As a new member, when I saw this autocratic power put into legislation, I couldn't believe it was happening in a democratically elected Legislature. What was even more unpalatable to me was that most of the Conservative members voted for it. I believe it was a dangerous precedent to insert these types of clauses. I also believe that Bill 62 is misleading. It accomplishes precisely the opposite of what it claims to do. The bill purports to

strengthen democracy through direct public consultation, but in fact it does the exact opposite, because there are intervening restrictions and stipulations that are imposed.

Bill 62 gives this government the right to veto any proposed municipal referendum question. It virtually takes power from locally elected officials and gives it to the government. The track record and the approval that this government has taken on clearly show that the only intent is to control municipalities. It is evident that the government has not developed policy that enables municipalities to better deliver their services more cost-effectively.

What the province does do is dictate to the municipality what it will do and how it will do it. The irony of it all is that municipalities are charged with the responsibilities of paying for it. You set up the Who Does What panel, which provided recommendations to clarify the role of what services should be provided by municipalities and what should be provided by the province. Yet the provincial government is usually extremely selective in what it wants to hear. Many of the recommendations were tossed out. In the end, the provincial government did what it wanted to do and didn't even take the advice from its own panel.

I want to address this section of the referenda: Municipalities are not protected under the Constitution. This makes them vulnerable to the whims of the province. Part III, from section 27 to 40, is a prime example whereby the province will force its will on to municipalities by attaching strings to municipal questions to be put to the electorate, strict conditions to referendum questions.

I'll point out the contradiction of where direct democracy can actually be suppressed or stifled. I'll read from subsection (2) under "Rules." It says: "A question authorized by bylaw under clause 8(1)(b) shall not comply with the following rules. It shall concern a matter within the jurisdiction of the municipality." What does this mean? Does this mean that if a municipality chooses to use a referendum to challenge the provincial government, it cannot do so?

I don't understand how on one hand this bill says it wants to help to encourage direct democracy, but then the minister has the power to actually stifle direct democracy, because in this legislation it states that a question in a referendum "shall not concern a matter which has been prescribed by the minister as a matter of provincial interest." Now, what I question is the fact that provincial interest can be anything. Remember, the municipality is under provincial jurisdiction. The choice of word, provincial "interest": What does that mean? How is that identified? How is that interpreted by the province, by the minister? "Interest," in my estimation, is subjective and ambiguous.

In the other section, 8.3(1), "Implementation," we have gone through a referendum and these are the terms laid out in legislation that makes the results the burden of a municipality. It states that at least 50% of the eligible electors in a municipality must vote on the question.

Well, the minister has already spoken to the fact that the voter turnout is low in municipal elections, and I found out the figures for Sarnia-Lambton. In 1991 we had 41%. In 1994, when we were going to have a judicial inquiry, it was 50.7%. In 1997, it was 48%. I have heard that direct councillors have been elected to make decisions, but the minister is constantly suggesting that municipal councillors are not quite democratic enough; it's only the provincially elected politicians who have been elected to represent the interests of the public. You stated that not long ago. So who exactly elects the politicians at the municipal level? How does that differ democratically from members elected to this Legislature?

This government has shown over and over again that it will impose its will no matter what the public really wants. I believe that is very evident, and I will state again that I believe this bill is not credible in its intent to suggest that it is about direct democracy, because that is exactly what it is not about.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I'm very pleased to be able to make some remarks on the bill that is before us this evening. I listened with some interest as the minister spoke to the bill that he introduced. He talked about referenda as a means of providing direct democracy for taxpayers in Ontario. He talked a little bit about the history of referenda and how they have been used.

I would be the first to admit that I probably do not have the extensive background in understanding referenda that perhaps the minister does, but from what I have been able to read and understand about the purpose of referenda, they are rarely used to bind elected bodies but are regularly used as a weather balloon, as it were, as a gauge, as a barometer: what is the sense of the public, what is the sense of a community around any given issue. I think that is a good idea and I think that is to be encouraged, so I would never stand in this Legislature and suggest that referenda are not a good democratic tool. Where I have the problem is where the act provides that the results of a referendum would be binding upon a municipality. I have a number of reasons why I'm concerned about that.

For one thing, referendums under Bill 62 do not come from the grassroots; they don't come from the voters. They have to come from the municipal council, the local government. I would ask, then, how is this direct democracy if the people within a community have no mechanism by which they can initiate a question on a ballot? I understand they have that now. I believe Bill 62 would remove that opportunity for residents within a community to put forward a question on a municipal ballot. I would suggest that is not direct democracy. That is indeed less democracy when it can only come from the local municipality. Also, local boards will no longer be allowed to put questions forward at the time of a municipal election. So I'm somewhat puzzled with the presentation that Bill 62 broadens a community's opportunity to have a hand in the affairs of the local government when I believe quite the opposite would be the case.

2020

I'm concerned around the numbers that this legislation provides for, in that in order for the results of a referendum question to be binding, there would need to be a 50% voter turnout and it would require a 50% majority in order to carry the question. My math would suggest that technically 25% of the people in any community could then provide direction for the local government that would bind that government. My understanding of democracy is that of a majority rule, and I hardly think that 25% of any population could be considered a majority. Yet technically what is provided in this document very clearly would allow for 25% of any community who would vote on any question to bind a local municipality in a direction.

While the government, in its legislation, would indicate that a municipality would be bound by those results, there's no indication in the legislation that if the result of that question would increase the financial commitment or responsibility of that local municipality, the government is going to assist them in addressing that additional cost. So if there were a question that would suggest that there would be some type of equitable service for ratepayers in a community, like streets or sidewalks or whatever, and that was supported by the majority of the people who answered the referendum, there's nothing in this legislation that would say the government is prepared—it says the municipality must do everything it can to address that question, but the government has no obligation, at least none that I've been able to read.

I'm also concerned that the minister has the ability to restrict a referendum, or the question on a referendum, if it is deemed a matter of provincial interest. The minister did talk earlier about the mechanism within the legislation that allows an appeal to the chief elections officer. However, the appeal is only on the question of whether or not the question is clear, concise and neutral, and if in fact the question is capable of being answered in the affirmative or the negative. But there is no means to appeal whether or not a community is of the opinion that the matter they want to put within their community is a matter of provincial interest.

When I think of my riding, I can think of some questions that communities in my riding I'm sure would be very happy to have a referendum on. The minister talked about how we need to connect with the voters in our riding. You know, I think I'm coming to understand that concept. In my sense, the very best way to connect with the voters is to get out there and talk to them and listen to them: What are they saying? What are they telling us?

I think in my riding the farmers would really have appreciated the opportunity to answer a question on whether or not they believed the OMAFRA offices were important and valued service providers within our community. In my riding, I believe the representative within the county of Hastings would very much like to see a question on the next municipal ballot that talks about

water-drawing permits within our community. I believe the people of Greater Napanee would really appreciate the opportunity to tell the province whether or not it wants a superdump in its community. But they are not eligible under this legislation, because it would be suggested there is a provincial interest there.

I suggest to the members of the government that this legislation is more about: "Do as I say and not as I do. We want the municipalities to be accountable to 25% of the people in your area, but if it's a matter of provincial interest then all bets are off, the rules don't apply, we run things our own way." That's a double standard that the people of this province are going to see through, and they will not be used in that way. They will understand that this legislation is window dressing. It has a catchy title. It would suggest that somehow, once this legislation is passed, people in Ontario will have a direct link, a direct pipeline to democracy, when that is not the case at all. They are less able, if this bill is passed, to have an opportunity to have the sentiments of a community measured by a referendum than they are today.

I hope the minister will consider some of these points. People in my riding have asked me these questions. "Ask the minister this. Ask the minister, how can this be more direct democracy?" So I'm bringing their points to this discussion this evening and I'm very happy to have had the opportunity to make their interests known tonight.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael Brown): Further debate?

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I'm very proud to follow my colleagues in this debate tonight. They very eloquently have poked holes through this legislation.

It's really interesting to see that this government is being very consistent in its elaborate and excessive titling of bills nowadays: "Direct Democracy through Municipal Referendums." As my colleagues have pointed out, it's not direct democracy at all. These ballot items are basically directed by municipalities and have to be approved by municipal councils and by the provincial government.

The idea of direct democracy to me smacks of the type of ballot initiatives you see in United States politics. I follow some of this very closely because I have relatives in the United States. My sister in California will send me the descriptive book of all the ballot initiatives that have been initiated by people, by voters, not by municipal council, not given a rubber stamp by a provincial government, or state government in that case, but actually people who feel that something should be changed and who go around in their neighbourhoods and in their communities. They get a certain number of people to sign up that this question should be given to the people in their November elections, and these ballot initiatives are very powerful tools in democracy.

The title of this bill would make it appear that this is the same sort of initiative that is being offered to the people of Ontario, but that is not the case at all. This is not the type of initiative that's being allowed. This

cannot be initiated by voters. If you were to look at trying to develop some grassroots democracy in our representational system that we have here, if you are to go to some sort of referendum system, it should be initiated by the voter. That's certainly not the case here. Even if the voter were to give an idea to council, if the provincial government felt that this was really a provincial issue, it would be nixed by the government.

In California, Proposition 13 was one of the very famous, and for some people infamous, propositions that were put forward over 20 years ago now that basically put a cap on education taxation in the state. There's some of the danger of this type of initiative, which basically starved the state of California schools for over 20 years until this was overturned by another initiative.

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In simple terms, it looked very good. A voter took the initiative to say, "We need to have a ballot item, voted on by all the voters in California, that allocations to school boards would be frozen at present levels" until this was overturned. People said: "Great, we're going to be able to cap our own taxation. Yes, I'm going to vote for capping the taxation for schools." California almost destroyed their school system through this act of referendum.

There are tremendous dangers with this sort of bill. In this case, you don't even sort of flirt with danger and give the freedom to the voter to initiate. It's basically a sham, a put-up job. If a municipality wants to hold a referendum on a certain issue, they have to apply, cap in hand, to the provincial government. They have to come to Queen's Park and ask permission. Direct democracy? I don't think so. But it is consistent with how this government has treated municipalities over the last five years.

We have really gone back to the old Robarts-Davis paternalistic attitude in how we treat our municipalities, that somehow we at Queen's Park know better than the municipal people, who are directly elected by their voters. We now really have the stamp of Queen's Park on our municipal councils. We now have complete control of our school boards like never before by the Harris government. Basically we have been getting away from any sort of direct democracy, and we're having all government at the municipal and provincial levels completely run out of the Premier's office. It boils down to that.

Previous regimes in the past 20 and 30 years saw a lot of independence in cabinet ministers and fights coming to the cabinet table, where vigorous discussions and arguments were brought to and fro about a certain policy issue. That is no longer the case in the government of Ontario. What we have now is basically a very centralized government right out of the Premier's office with the Premier and his staff, and there's no democracy left.

We can see that in the way the Harris government has treated municipalities. I think the forced amalgamation of Toronto is classic, going against a referendum that the people in all the six cities that were to become the new city of Toronto voted on. But did Harris listen to

that? No, he decided that was the way it was going to be and that the six small cities that made up the greater Toronto region were to become the new city of Toronto.

It's the same with amalgamations right across the province. This government is basically telling municipal governments how they should govern. To say that bigger is better is just not proven around this province, and it's not proven around the world. Academic studies of amalgamations around the world have not shown one example of cost savings. They're not there. What this is about, with the Harris government, is making sure that municipalities are of large enough critical mass to be able to handle phase two of downloading. Once we get over the next municipal elections at the end of this year, there will be another forced amalgamation set on a raft of municipalities right across this province. That will get it down, maybe, to the area of 200 to 250. Then we'll see another level of downloading coming on to the municipalities to make the provincial government look good and reduce the cost of operating government at the provincial level. Therefore the Harris government can continue to reduce provincial income taxes.

But what we're starting to see—I know the Speaker has spoken to me and other members about small business people who have come to them in their municipalities. Hotel owners are one example that comes to mind. They are now paying more and more municipal taxes. Not being that profitable an operation, they're not really seeing the savings in the provincial tax system but are paying more and more municipal taxes, and many of them are going to start to be forced out of business, all of this because of the downloading and because of the greater control of this government on municipalities.

School boards are another example. I represent a region that includes the great Northeastern school board that is the largest school board in the province. The school board is greater than the distance from Kingston to Sarnia. That's a good chunk of southern Ontario. In my area that's just one school board. The trustees who are spread over that region don't feel in contact with the parents and certainly, vice versa, the parents no longer know who their trustee is. When they have a problem with the school bus or with the teacher or principal in the school and they want to talk to their trustee, the trustee could be 200 kilometres away in another community and maybe doesn't even understand the problems in that community school. Bigger is not better.

These trustees that we have had and the local councillors are really very good value to all of us as voters and taxpayers in the province. They are very good value for the few thousand dollars a year that these people make, who volunteer their time to serve local government in the interests of people across this province. They are very good people who really have the best of intentions. All these bills, like the Fewer Politicians Act, the whole idea that fewer politicians is the best way to go, are really an insult to the men and women who have served over the years and continue to serve the people of Ontario, especially at the local level.

They really want to better their communities working at the community level, which probably is the most important level to be working at, where we have the most payback of how our daily life is influenced. These people are very good value. To be saying that these people are costing too much and are not of value is an insult and it's wrong. These people are of great value. Municipal politicians are of great value. We should be respecting them, we should be uplifting them, we should be celebrating the democracy we have at the municipal level.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bisson: It was interesting to listen to the many comments from the opposition caucus in regard to this bill. I'm going to have an opportunity in about eight minutes to comment more fully in doing the lead on this particular bill on behalf of the NDP caucus, but I want to take the two minutes that I have to just respond to a couple of the points that were made in the debate that ensued a short time ago.

I can't help but think back to the time when the Tories were in a different situation. I remember the Tories from 1990 to 1995 when they were in opposition. I remember at that time they were railing against the NDP government, and before that they were railing against the Peterson government, as I remember correctly, about how provincial governments didn't want to work with municipalities and that they were coming in with top-down solutions and weren't allowing local democracy and local decisions to be made within their communities. I remember those speeches by people like the now Premier, Mr Harris, and Mr Eves, the finance minister, and others who are here now in cabinet portfolios.

It's interesting what happened the moment they walked in the cabinet door. They forgot all of those things they said in opposition, because if you look at what the government in action has done by way of municipal reform over the last five or six years, it's all about bigger government telling smaller government what to do and, "If you don't like it, we're going to whack you over the head."

That's been the approach of this government, quite frankly. For a government that campaigned in 1995, then as the third-place opposition party, on the Common Sense Revolution, and inside the Revolution they say, "We are going to work with municipal governments to be able to respond"—look at that. I just happened to get a copy of my Common Sense Revolution. If you take a look in it—and I will talk about it a little bit later—you talked about how you were going to work with municipalities.

This bill does nothing to work with municipalities when it comes to the reform of the communities of Hamilton, Norfolk and Ottawa. What this does is give a top-down solution that in the end doesn't work for the people in those communities.

Mr Tilson: I want to comment on the three or four members of the Liberal caucus who addressed this issue of binding municipal questions, the legislation on municipal referendums. With them, I had a difficult time

determining whether they were in favour of it or opposed to the topic, generally speaking, of referendums. Some of them were for it; some of them were against it.

Mr Agostino: Let's have a vote on it.

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Mr Tilson: Yes, let's have a vote on it. They were unanimous on one thing, and the criticism seemed to be that this legislation, they say, was a cynical attack on direct democracy. Some of them used those words.

As has been the pattern of the Liberal presentation, the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale several days ago listed off, as did the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, I believe, the different statistics of how municipal councils vote, and it's all under 50%. Well, this legislation is very specific, and well it should be. It should have very high standards. I gather that if the Liberals are in favour of this legislation, they are prepared to accept lesser standards. This legislation has tough standards. It's saying that the question must be phrased so it results in a yes-or-no answer; the question must be clear and concise; the language must be unbiased.

Then it gets into the topic of, to be binding, the results must be supported by a majority of the voters of 50% plus one. What's wrong with that? There is nothing wrong with that. I gather they're saying, "If you've got 25%, that can count." No, we're saying that's not good enough. If the issue is that important, that many people should show up to vote.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): The member probably couldn't understand what we were saying because we spoke with so much good sense. We're opposed to this bill. We're opposed to this bill because, like so much your government says and does, the bill purports to say one thing, but in fact it does another. I suggest to the member that if he had listened to my colleague from Timiskaming, to my colleague from Sarnia, to my colleague from Frontenac, to my colleague from St Catharines, he would know full well that this bill has nothing to do with democracy and has everything to do with stifling democracy.

Just like you didn't want to talk about the Premier's new planes, you don't want to talk about the ORC and you don't want to respond to ballot initiatives that have been placed throughout this province. Make no mistake: The Ontario Liberal Party opposes this bill because not only is it undemocratic, it in fact stifles the ability of municipalities to participate in the great questions of the day.

On many instances this government tries to stifle debate. You won't even face the House. You sat for 41 days. The Premier of this province has an absolutely shameless record of not attending question period, so don't tell us about democracy. This is nothing but more Tory spin. It's nothing but more Tom Long rhetoric. It's nothing but right-wing lunacy. It's not democratic, despite what the title says.

If the members opposite took the time to read past page 1, and I know they can't read much past the pictures and page 1, they would understand, as my colleague from

Eglinton in his very eloquent remarks pointed out, that this bill is not democratic. It restricts the right of municipalities to participate and, like so much else this government does, it effectively restricts democracy.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I am insulted by the comments of the member from Windsor. I can read past page 1.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: If you could just sit down, both of you. It's not a point of privilege.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Certainly I am delighted that I have offended him.

The Acting Speaker: That also is not a point of order. Questions and comments?

Hon Mr Clement: I am delighted to participate in the debate once more and thank the members for Eglinton-Lawrence, Sarnia-Lambton, Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, and Timiskaming-Cochrane for their comments respecting the bill. I would say a couple of things, just to clear the record for anyone who would be watching this debate on television or for the record for future generations.

Responding to the member for Sarnia-Lambton, one of the purposes of this bill is actually to remove the Henry VIII clause, and I wanted to make sure that was on the record. As we know as a matter of public record, when the Liberals were in power they used the Henry VIII clause eight times. Perhaps the honourable member didn't know that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Clement: In this effect we are correcting a wrong that was perhaps endemic of the record of one previous government.

The member from Hastings made some points about how this did not go far enough, and then the member from Timiskaming said the initiatives go too far. So I think the member from Wellington was quite right when he said we have on the opposition some elasticity of political views on this issue. From our point of view, we think it's a step in the right direction. We think that making these sorts of referendums, adding credibility and legitimacy to them, providing the conditions by which they can be binding on the municipal council: all of these are positive steps to renew and increase the accountability of municipalities and the legitimacy of their decisions, and this can only help, just as it helps us at the provincial level when we passed the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, designed to enhance the ability of the citizenry to know they can have a say on important issues like taxes. This is another step in the direction we all want to go in.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mrs Dombrowsky: I'm delighted to give a response. I find it interesting that members of the government continue to attempt to put the spin on this legislation that this is going to provide direct democracy for the people of Ontario. That is not the case, and we on this side of the House have to work to dispel the myth and expose the

truth. If you really want to bring in legislation that will provide direct democracy, then let's see some legislation that will enable municipalities to put questions of importance or concern on their municipal ballots.

For example, in the community of Sarnia-Lambton, let's see the possibility of entertaining a referendum question on whether the residents of that community support the establishment and operation of Safety-Kleen in that community. Let's see that kind of question allowed. That's not allowed in this proposed legislation.

To stand here and suggest that people in Ontario are going to have a better opportunity to have their voices heard and addressed in a meaningful way is simply less than accurate. I think you are painting a picture for the people of Ontario that in many ways makes it more difficult for the views of local taxpayers to be heard and, in fact, followed.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: It's with some pleasure that I have the opportunity to respond to this bill which, among a number of things, tends to try to fulfill the government's promise on referendums, which I say they're still breaking, and tries to fix the mess this government has created by way of municipal reform in communities like Hamilton, Norfolk, Ottawa and Sudbury. I'm going to speak to those parts separately.

First of all, as the municipal affairs critic for the NDP, I want to lay out for people that there are basically four substantive parts to this bill. I want to put on the record immediately that of the four substantive parts of this bill, one of them I can support and three I cannot. I'll deal up front with the one I can support and then deal with parts three, two and one separately afterwards.

The final part of the bill, part IV, deals with enacting the Town of Moosonee Act, 2000. What this is all about is the provincial government is trying to move on what has been an issue in the James Bay communities for some time, which is trying to move the town of Moosonee, now a development area board, to a municipality. It is work that frankly had been done by the Liberal government under David Peterson and work we did under the NDP with the leadership of Len Wood, who was the member for Cochrane North, and I would say a very admirable member for the work he did across that riding. Now it is being followed up by this government.

I have to say up front that no party—NDP, Liberal or Conservative—has seen this as a partisan bill. We see the change of the Moosonee Development Area Board to a municipality as a non-partisan bill, and all governments and all parties worked on it, trying to move it along. But the particular municipality has a number of complexities in it. It is a community that is primarily of aboriginal First Nations people who come from different parts of James Bay, places like Attawapiskat, Fort Albany, Peawanuck, Kashechewan and other places, as well as people from native communities on the Quebec side of James Bay who come into Moosonee and the Moose Factory area and establish themselves in order to get

work or sometimes to get back with family members. Also, in the mix, about 10% to 20% of the community is people from different parts of Canada and different parts of the world who come to live in the Moosonee area.

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What has happened is that there has not been a total consensus on the part of the public in Moosonee to move from a development area board to a municipality. Therefore, none of the governments wanted to force this decision on the municipality and, I think, rightfully so. The Bill Davis government in the past, eventually the Peterson and the Rae governments and, I would say, even the Harris government in its first term, did not want to foist a municipal structure on to Moosonee unless it was ready. It is only now, in the year 1999-2000, that there has been some will on the part of people within the municipality, or the area around the future municipality of Moosonee, to do so.

I want to say publicly up front that I will support that part of the legislation. I don't care which government it was—whether it was the Bob Rae government or the previous Liberal government—all governments would have done what the present government is doing in the way of changing Moosonee into a municipality, and that in itself is not a bad thing.

I also want to say at the beginning of my speech that at the end I'll be splitting my time with other members of the caucus who will have an opportunity to finish at the end of it. I just got that in about two minutes into the speech.

I do, however, have two points for the minister. First, in moving towards a municipal structure in Moosonee, I think it's very important that the minister answered questions in the House last week put by me, the member representing the future municipality of Moosonee, that there had to be a couple of guarantees going into this. The first one was that we have to make sure the municipality of Moosonee, when it is formed, does not lose any of the transfers it is now getting from the provincial government. In other words, the transfers they get to run all the programs—or lack of programs, I should say—in Moosonee will not be any less, once they move to a municipal structure, than they were before. In fairness, the minister, in answer to that question said: "Yes, that is the intention. The government will not be reducing transfers to Moosonee once it becomes a municipality." The minister confirmed that in the House, and I am going to keep him to that word.

The part he did not answer adequately—and I know he's paying particular attention, because he's standing there with the former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, who I know is also very interested in this issue—is how to deal with the transitional costs that will be associated with converting the Moosonee development area board into a municipality. They're going to have to hire lawyers. There's going to have to be some infrastructure dollars put forward.

For people who have never been to Moosonee, it's a wonderful municipality, but it lacks in the way of basic infrastructure compared to other municipalities across the province. I would say that much has been done. I've got to give the former member, Len Wood, full credit. I helped him with some of the work, but 98% of the work on water and sewer projects in that community was Len's. We're going to see the switching on to the new system this spring, plus work that had been done before that. There's much to do in the way of roads and transportation infrastructure. We need to make sure there are some transitional dollars put forward when the municipality is formed, so they can actually go ahead with some of the work they have to do.

There will also be other transitional costs, as people understand. Because they are a development area board, they cannot enforce bylaws, and they don't have any bylaw enforcement officers. So there's going to be an incurred cost. Once they go to a municipal structure, they're going to need a planning department and bylaw enforcement officers. There's going to be another part of the administration that will have to be added into the system. I want to make sure, and I want to say publicly now, that if the government is not going to move on that and give them the powers, then this is nothing but downloading. But I'm going to be hopeful that the government is going to move forward and is going to make sure there are some transitional dollars available to the new municipality of Moosonee to cover the additional costs that will be incurred because of their becoming a municipality.

I look to the minister across the way, to what I think is a nod—I hope that is the case. There will be some transitional costs to deal with: How do you create a bylaw officers' department? How do you deal with a planning board? How do you deal with a number of services that the new municipality is now going to have to take care of that they were not taking care of before because they were a development area board? I look forward to that particular part of the bill going through committee. I would ask the government to make sure that at some time at the committee level we are able to deal with concerns that may be brought forward from the community about how that's done.

There is also an impact, I must say, on communities like the city of Timmins and the town of Kapuskasing, first because the city of Timmins, through its district area service board, is actually administering some of the services, such as welfare, up in Moosonee. In addition there is the Timmins Housing Authority, which manages some of the housing stock. As they become a municipality, some of those issues become a little less than clear and a little bit grey. We need to make sure, one, that we figure out how those services are going to be supported once the municipality is put into vigour and, two, that the municipality of Moosonee actually has money to be able to pay for those things.

I want to say for the record, Mr Speaker, and to the minister, that if I had to vote on part IV of the bill dealing

with the creation of the municipality of Moosonee, I would vote in favour of the bill, no question. However, here's the problem. Like everything else this government does, it takes a good piece of news, which is the creation of the municipality of Moosonee, and it throws in a bunch of other things. It puts members, I would argue, in the government and members in the opposition in a position of, how do you deal with it?

Personally, I do not believe in some of the provisions the government is putting forward by way of part III of this bill, which deals with how municipal aldermen are able to recoup expenses for their campaigns. Plus, I have a real problem with the referendum section under part III, and I am diametrically opposed to what is in part II and part I of the bill that has to do with the transformation of the municipalities of Hamilton, Sudbury, Ottawa and Norfolk into larger megacities like we've done here in Toronto.

You're caught in between: They give you one part of the bill which is good, and they give you a whole bunch of other parts which are not so good. On the balance, I'm afraid I'm not going to be able to vote in support of this bill on the basis of what it does inside the rest of the act. Let me deal with part II and part I of the bill first, and I'll deal with part III, which is referendum, in the latter part of this debate.

What the government is doing here is quite simple. If you remember, the government introduced legislation last fall, once they had returned from winning their second term in government, to reform the municipalities of Hamilton, Sudbury, Norfolk and Ottawa into larger mega-municipalities, just like they did to the city of Toronto in their first term. They rushed so fast to pass that legislation last fall that they made a ton of mistakes.

I remember the time, and you can go back to the Hansard and check it, when myself as municipal affairs critic and other members of my caucus and, I would argue, some of the opposition members said: "Listen, you're forcing this legislation through so fast that you're not allowing the proper amount of time in committee. You're going to have all kinds of problems with how the bill is not going to work once you enact it."

The government said: "Oh no, we're smart. We know everything. Heck, we don't need debate in this House. We'll time-allocate the bill. We're not going to allow for public consultation by way of real committee hearings in communities that are being affected. We're smarter. We're Mike Harris. We believe in top-handed solutions. We're going to shove the solutions down the pipe and the municipalities are going to have to accept them, and they're going to be really happy because we're going to get it right."

We pointed out at the time a number of problems having to do with different sections of the bill that did not work technically. We said that if you pass the bill the way it is, not only do we think it's wrong-minded as far as where you're going, we're not convinced that making larger municipalities will save you money. It has been the experience in Toronto, where a megacity has been

created, that you're not saving any money. What you've done is created a bigger government. Mel Lastman now is more powerful than Tony Clement, the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I see the minister bowing to Mel Lastman, the mayor, every time he walks into his office because—think about it—the power this mayor and council now have is greater than that of most cabinet ministers.

Second, it's not really saving us any money because larger government is not necessarily cheaper. I would argue that a larger government is more expensive. It's pretty simple: The bigger the administration, the higher the overhead costs. All these top bureaucrats say, "I've got more people working for me, so I deserve more money," and they get it. I was just taking a look at the financial disclosure act before I came to this debate. You should see some of the figures top administrators and top bureaucrats get in the city of Toronto. It's enough to make your head spin. Most CEOs—some CEOs; I shouldn't say "most," because a lot of them make money in private corporations—would salivate at some of the salaries these people get, and that's thanks to Mike Harris. Quite frankly, create a larger municipality and build the argument why you've got to pay people more for more responsibility.

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It's interesting to note, in the case of Sudbury, where the transition team is now working on how to create this huge supercity of Sudbury and how to pay for services and work things out and be cheaper for the taxpayers, that the people on the transition team are telling the minister: "There's no money to be saved. There's not a sou, not a cent." Not any money is going to be saved in the new municipality of Sudbury. So you have to say to yourself, why is the government doing this? I believe it's quite simple. It's an ideological belief that's built on nothing more than this: that if you make a supercity, somehow it's going to make things super nice and super good and super efficient. All it's going to do is make it super expensive, super bureaucratic, and it ain't going to work very well at all.

I say you were wrong in the fall of 1999, when you came with legislation to create these municipalities. If they wanted to create supermunicipalities, they had the provisions to do that under existing law. In fact, it has been done in a number of municipalities where it has been locally driven. But for the province to bring a top-down approach to this thing is high-handed. We said at the time, last fall: "If you rush the legislation through, you're going to have all kinds of problems. We'll be back here in the House later on in the spring or next fall to fix the problems."

Just to give you an idea, take a look. This is just the section of the bill that deals with fixing the problems in the bill that the government introduced last fall. These are just the sections dealing with the Municipal Act. Look at all the mistakes they made. They had to go through and amend about four inches of paper in the bill to try to make this thing work. We told them that last

year. We said, "Listen, it ain't going to work." What did the government do? They didn't listen. They just turned around and did what the heck they wanted, never mind the public, never mind the municipal politicians who were trying to tell you: "Slow down and at least get this right. If you're going to impose a municipality on us the size of whatever, let us have a chance to work through the process on how this thing is going to work." But they didn't listen.

I went to the legislative library. I've got to say, here's a wonderful place, because we keep everything at the legislative library and we have wonderful staff there who always have things at the tips of their fingers. As a matter of fact, I asked one of the pages here earlier, "Can you go down and get me a copy of the Common Sense Revolution?" They were back up here in, I would say, about a minute and a half flat—wonderful work by our pages and wonderful work by the people of the legislative library. I asked for the Common Sense Revolution because, as I said, I wanted to remember what Mike Harris had to say about how he was going to work with municipalities in the election of 1995, when he ran on the Common Sense Revolution.

I'm looking at page 5. You guys remember because you were there. You ran on this in 1995 and you said in the Common Sense Revolution that you were going to do something very special with municipalities, and here's what you had to say to municipalities in 1995. If I had been a municipal politician I would have said: "Hey, they got something here. Maybe I should vote for them." Well, besides saying, "There's only one taxpayer"—they forgot about that, because user fees have eroded that, but that's for another debate—they said on page 3, in the section dealing with municipalities, "We will work closely with municipalities to ensure that any actions we take will not result in increases to local property taxes." Five years later, municipalities across this province are having to raise property taxes to deal with the downloading.

Interjections: No.

Mr Bisson: They say no, but do you know why they're saying no? Because we had to bring in legislation to freeze property taxes as a result of your downloading. Do you remember the five, five and 10 thing that you did? Jeez, we said, "If you guys start downloading, it's going to mean higher property taxes." You said, as Tory Mike Harris: "I'm smart. I know everything. Nobody else knows anything. I will do it by way of closure motions and I'll get it all right." They introduced one bill to start the downloading. It resulted in seven pieces of legislation to try to fix the mess they created in the first place, and they ended up breaking the promise they made in the Common Sense Revolution—a broken promise.

I'm a taxpayer. I pay municipal taxes, as most of these people do, and my taxes went up under your watch. Why? Because you've downloaded to municipalities. The small business people in my community were running to me back in 1996-97, when you started this process, saying: "Gilles, look at the tax bills. My taxes are going

to go up by 100%." I had people like Bupont Motors and other businesses across the riding with 130% increases. I brought the government to the estimates committee in order to raise the issue and then when I sat with the minister, he went: "Oh, I've got a real problem there. Going to have to fix that. We're going to introduce legislation to freeze municipal property taxes." So they've raised it not more than five, five and 10. Well, an increase is an increase is an increase. I don't care how you cut it, you guys broke your promise in the Common Sense Revolution.

Then you say on page 7—this is even better, you know, when they said how they were going to work out change with municipalities. I remember the Tories were mad about how the Peterson government dealt with municipalities and how the Rae government dealt with municipalities. We were dealing with that at that time. Do you remember? It was called disentanglement. The NDP Rae government went through the process and we said, "We need to sit down with municipalities to figure out ways of disentangling the overlap between provincial and municipal sectors." And it was a true set of negotiations because, quite frankly, it was a fairly difficult process to go through and a lot of good stuff came out of it.

The Tory Harris agenda said, in the Common Sense Revolution, "Join the Mike Harris team at 1-800-903-MIKE," and I forget what particular issue this is of the Common Sense Revolution. "We will sit down with municipalities to discuss ways of reducing government entanglement and bureaucracy with an eye to eliminating waste and duplication as well as unfair downloading"—as well as unfair downloading—"by the province." What did these guys do? You're the masters of downloading. You have downloaded how many services? Ambulances, public health, welfare, housing, planning—the list goes on. All of that has been downloaded to municipalities, and you guys promised in the Common Sense Revolution that you were going to sit down with municipalities and figure out a way to do it together. You didn't sit down with them. You didn't try to figure out how to do it with them. You broke your election promise. You shoved it down their throats unwillingly. This government says, "Oh, we kept our promises." You guys wouldn't know how to keep a promise if it came up and bit you. You guys broke the promise that you made in the Common Sense Revolution, and I say to the government that you were wrong to do that.

Is there between the government and opposition a certain ground, and as well with municipalities, to figure out ways of making municipalities and the provincial government work better together? Yes. There's not a member in the opposition or the government side of the House or in municipalities who is not prepared to sit down and figure out ways to make this happen. But you guys bring legislation in, you shove it through the House, it's time-allocated. You do it wrong because you don't want to listen to the bureaucrats, who are drafting your own legislation. You say: "Oh, they're bureaucrats. We

can't trust them. They're not party loyalists so we're not going to trust them." So you allow the legislation to go through here really quickly. You don't allow good debate. You don't allow public hearings. Then you have problems with your legislation. You come back, as you have today, with a bill. I don't even want to pick it up; I'll get a hernia trying to pick up the parts of the Municipal Act. I know you guys don't want me to get hurt because there's no workers' compensation in here, or WSIB, as you call it. But the point is, you've got a real problem.

On part I and part II of the bill, the government said it didn't have time to fix anything back when they introduced the bill and they had to do it quickly and all that because they knew better and everything was right. They had to do it in a hurry. We said at the time, « Monsieur le Président, il y a un problème. Il n'y a pas de protections pour les services en français pour les communautés de Sudbury et Hamilton, où il existe déjà des services en français, où il existe déjà des lois locales sur la question des services en français. »

Le gouvernement nous a dit, « Non, non, Monsieur Bisson. Voyons, donc. On n'a pas le temps de traiter cette décision. On n'a pas le temps de traiter ce point. On va aller en avant bien vite, puis on va arranger ça tout. Vous allez voir : tout va marcher bien. »

Vous êtes revenus avec la législation. Vous avez fait des amendements avec votre loi de l'automne passé. Il n'y a rien dans ce projet de loi, il n'y a aucun amendement, qui garantit les droits aux services linguistiques pour les francophones à Ottawa ou à Sudbury. Excusez-moi, les monsieurs du gouvernement. Si vous aviez eu le temps de rentrer avec des amendements, comme vous l'avez fait aujourd'hui dans ce projet de loi, vous auriez pu prendre une seconde pour mettre dans le projet de loi un amendement qui aurait dit, « Là où il existe déjà des lois locales qui disent que les services pour les francophones sont protégés, comme à Sudbury et à Ottawa, on va s'assurer que ces mêmes lois restent en vigueur dans ces municipalités. »

Cela aurait été très simple. Cela aurait pris deux secondes, bien vite, comme vous faites d'habitude. Rien, rien, rien. Puis moi, je me dis comme francophone, « Vous autres avez bien décidé de quel bord vous êtes. Vous êtes un gouvernement qui ne croit pas aux droits linguistiques. Vous êtes un gouvernement qui nous tape sur la tête et qui ne veut pas respecter les droits des francophones dans la province. » C'est encore là un exemple.

So I say to the government that with regard to parts I and II of the bill, there's no way I can support that section of the act. It refers back to all the legislation you brought into this House last fall dealing with municipal restructuring by way of making megacities in the four municipalities of Hamilton, Norfolk, Sudbury and Ottawa, and it doesn't deal adequately with the issue as far as I am concerned. If you were trying to find ways to make this thing work, you're certainly not making it work.

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As to the latter part of the bill, part III, this is the most hypocritical part of the bill. "Hypocritical" I take back; it is the most colourful part of the bill when it comes to the truth. The government members try to make us believe they are the defenders of democracy. Mr Clement, the Minister of Municipal Affairs; Mr Eves; Mr Harris; Mr Runciman; the Minister of Transportation all believe in local democracy. They tell us a good line. They stand in this House and say, "We want to give local citizens more say; we want to make sure that citizens decide what happens in their municipalities," and rightfully so. Referendums? Maybe—I don't know. I'm not a big fan of referendums to start with, but I'm certainly prepared to get into the debate. I prefer a system of proportional representation when it comes to provincial politics, but that's for another debate, if you're going to talk about real democracy.

The government is amazing in its gall when it comes into this House and introduces legislation on referendums. They bring a bill into this House that they say will give local citizens more say about what happens in their municipalities, because it will give citizens the right to introduce the concept of binding referendums on their municipalities.

Then they put so many weasel words into the legislation that it's almost impossible—I won't say impossible but pretty darned impossible—to get any of this passed when it comes to a referendum question. For example, let's say the town of Kapuskasing was forced by the provincial government to amalgamate with the communities of Val Rita, Smooth Rock Falls, Moonbeam, Fauquier and Opasatika, and the local citizens were to say, "Hang on, we want a referendum to put our mark on this issue." What would happen under the legislation? The first thing is that they would not be able to ask the question because the legislation, as it's proposed here by the government, says that the Minister of Municipal Affairs will have the final say on what the question is and if the question is to be allowed. If the question in any way, shape or form touches a provincial issue or provincial jurisdiction, the municipality does not have the right to pose the question.

The citizens think they're getting new power by way of this legislation to introduce a referendum concept in their municipality, but practically, the minister has the final word.

To me, the ultimate test of a referendum is, can the citizens express themselves on a particular question and can they make that expression count when it comes to saying yea or nay to the question on the ballot? As we go through this legislation, we find that it's neither yea nor nay, because at the end of the day it's the minister, Mr Clement, who's going to decide what the question is.

The minister is going to decide if the question is appropriate, and if the question touches provincial jurisdiction, such as the province of Ontario saying to Kapuskasing, Val Rita, Opasatika and others that they have to amalgamate, there's nothing the citizens can do

about it. Secondly, even if they could, the way the legislation is drafted, you have to have better than a 50% turnout and win better than 50% of the vote for the referendum question to stick. We've all been around politics long enough; there's hardly an election at the municipal level that's better than 50%, especially on referendum questions.

My Lord, the biggest referendum question the city of Toronto ever saw was on the megacity and it didn't reach 50% of the people voting. Yes, 78% voted against it, but it was less than 50% who showed up to vote. Such is the nature of democracy. You can't force people into the ballot box at gunpoint. It's a democratic right that you hope they exercise. Maybe if we were to get into some kind of debate on how you entice people into utilizing that democratic franchise of voting, I'd be prepared to get into that.

But here's the really—I can't say “hypocritical,” eh, Mr Speaker? “Hypocritical” is against the rules? OK. I won't use the word “hypocritical,” because I can't. But it's interesting, because I've got two other pieces of legislation. I've got one piece of legislation introduced in 1987 by Mr Runciman, the then member for Leeds-Grenville, who came forward with legislation dealing with the referendum question. Just for people watching back home to know, the member for Leeds-Grenville, as he was called at the time, is a Conservative member of the government who sits in cabinet presently as the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Back in 1987, when he introduced the bill into this House, the bill was entitled “An Act to provide an opportunity for the electorate to express their views by means of referendum in Ontario.” That particular bill basically said the public had the right by way of referendum to hold the provincial government accountable on provincial issues as well as municipal issues. He gave carte blanche to referendums. They were non-binding referendums, but what would end up happening is that anybody would have the right to hold their government accountable by way of referendum.

My point is, how come that's not in this bill that we have before us tonight? How come all of a sudden the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Mike Harris and the rest of the cabinet say municipal citizens should not have the right to vote on an issue by way of referendum if it's provincial in jurisdiction? Yet in 1987, the members of your own caucus were putting forward legislation that was voted on by Mike Harris, Mr Runciman and all the other cabinet members who were members of your caucus back in 1987, and they voted in favour of referendum legislation that went a lot further than what you're putting forward today. In fact, it gave people referendum rights on provincial issues. What happened?

Wow, that's strong water. I just want to say to anybody watching, there really is no gin in here.

What has happened? Why did the Tory party, in third place in 1987, put forward legislation that gave far-sweeping powers to citizens to initiate a referendum on provincial issues, but now all of a sudden in the year

2000 the government Conservatives are saying, “No, we can't give people in municipalities the right to express their view by way of referendum on what is a provincial issue”? That's completely the opposite of what the government has put forward in their bill.

Then I've got another one, and this is the galling one. I saved this one for last. I'm sure the member for St Catharines is going to get great amusement as he listens to this one. If you'll remember, the member for St Catharines, there was a bill introduced, I think in September 1991, and I'll read the title of the act: “An Act to authorize Municipalities to obtain the Opinions of Electors respecting Provincial Budgets and Fiscal Policies.” Interesting. The Tories of the day and all of you who were Tories in this House back in 1991 got up and voted in favour of this legislation that would have given municipal voters the opportunity, on a municipal ballot of referendum, to decide what is going to happen when it comes to the policies of the province of Ontario.

There is nothing that is more of provincial jurisdiction than a budget. That is the core essence of what a government is all about, managing the fiscal responsibility of its particular government. Yet back in 1991, all the Conservatives voted in favour of giving municipal people the right to vote on fiscal policies of the province of Ontario. Who put forward that bill? Mike Harris. Mike Harris, your own leader, the now Premier of Ontario, put forward legislation that gave individual voters in municipalities the right to hold a referendum on what is a provincial issue, run by the municipality. Now hang on a second. Does this compare to the bill that we have before us now, where it says in the bill that you cannot by way of a municipal referendum decide a question that has provincial jurisdiction? You have the bill by Mike Harris, Bill 138, 1991, that says, “You will have the right as people living in a municipality to effect a referendum on what is an issue of provincial nature.”

What happened between these two bills? Why is it that all of a sudden you're saying you don't want to give people this right but you were ready to do it in 1991? I say it's hypocritical. You're a bunch of damned hypocrites. It's as simple as that.

The Acting Speaker: The member will withdraw and will refrain from using that word.

Mr Bisson: I'll refrain and withdraw the comment, but I hope I don't have to withdraw from the chamber just yet. I still have five minutes.

I have a real problem with the doublespeak of this government. They get up in this House, as we saw today in question period, and you've got a government that basically says one thing and does the complete opposite. It's all this placebo-type politics they're bringing to Ontario, something we've seen in the United States for some time. The government pronounces policy on an issue they see as politically sexy, introduces a bill in the House, and when you read the bill it doesn't do anything the government talked about in its press announcements.

Now we have referendum legislation that doesn't give anybody any referendum rights. You've created a

Victims' Bill of Rights supposedly to give victims rights in a crime that is brought to the courts, and the judges say there are no rights given in the government's bill.

You have the Attorney General on Monday out in front of the Don jail talking about having to deal with the whole issue of enforcing issues at the federal level when it comes to crime, and they have no jurisdiction on the issue whatsoever.

You've got the government in the House with a bill having to do with parental responsibility, supposedly to penalize the parents for what their kids have done, very politically popular with some. As a matter of fact, I was talking to a good friend of mine in Toronto whom I hadn't seen in some time. I went to see him the other day and he said: "You know, Gilles, I like that bill. Parental responsibility: It's about time we make those parents pay for what those kids are doing." I said: "Vlad, do you want the bill? I'll give it to you. I'll let you read it."

I provided him with the bill and when I saw him the other day, he'd read the bill and he said, "Gilles, it doesn't do that." I said: "That's the point. The government is saying the right things. Everybody wants to hear that somehow or other they've got a magical solution, but in the end there's nothing in the bills to make them work." Vlad said: "Well, what is this? What's going on? Why are they saying one thing and doing another?" I said, "Because they're a bunch of old politicians, no different than the rest."

They try to be the anti-government government. They try to be the anti-politicians government, but they're the worst kind of politicians you could ever have because they say one thing and do the other at every opportunity, and they make it look as if it's good news. The worst part about it—it drives me crazy—is they're getting away with it.

I was watching today in the House when the Minister of Labour had his Maple Leafs sweater out. The media were all out with their cameras to take pictures, but the minute there were real issues to be dealt with, the media were all gone. They had got the story for the day.

They say you should never criticize the media and their business but I've got to say to the Toronto media, "Get your act together." You would have never let the David Peterson government, the Davis government or the

Rae government get away with what these guys are getting away with by way of allowing them to do the kinds of doublespeak they're doing now. The thing is that it works, because what happens is we live in a world where there's so much information coming to us that we're being sold a bill of goods on a five-second sound clip.

That's what this government understands. You give the public the five-second sound clip they want to hear. The public—it's not their fault—say, "They say they're going to do something, so it's got to be good," and they don't find out until after, when they go to try to get those new services or deal with the issue the government raised, that there's not a hill of beans in the legislation they've done, and that in fact they've made things worse.

I say to the government that if it was good enough for Mike Harris in 1991 to introduce legislation that gave people the right to decide referendum questions in municipalities on provincial jurisdiction, where is the government today when it comes to giving people that same right? Was it that he was saying one thing then and another thing now? I say that's the case. The Premier was being—I can't say less than honest, can I, Mr Speaker? I can't say he was lying; it would be against the rules. So he was saying one thing and doing the other when it came to what he was doing.

There's about another 20 or 30 minutes left on the clock and I'd like to make sure that other members of my caucus have an opportunity to share in this lead. Being that it's almost 9:30 of the clock, I move adjournment of the debate for tonight.

The Acting Speaker: Before you sit down, perhaps you can indicate to myself and the table which members you will be sharing your time with.

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, there are so few, use your imagination.

The Acting Speaker: I think you can appreciate that we will have a problem if we—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, the member for Sault Ste Marie and the member for Hamilton-East.

It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2125.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 26 April 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 26 avril 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): Tomorrow during private members' hour we will be debating Bill 2, my private member's bill, which provides that a licensed medical doctor shall not be found guilty of professional misconduct or incompetence solely on the basis that the said doctor practises a therapy that is non-traditional or that departs from prevailing medical practice, unless there is evidence that proves that the therapy poses a greater risk to a patient's health than the traditional or prevailing practice.

This will be the third time this bill is debated at second reading. On two previous occasions, the bill was given unanimous consent but, unfortunately, on both occasions the bill died on the order paper.

Many positive things have happened since I first debated second reading of the bill on May 8, 1997. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario established an ad hoc committee on alternative medicine which made 14 recommendations in its report. One of the key conclusions is: "In essence, we believe that physicians be allowed a reasonable degree of latitude in the kinds of therapies they offer to their patients. We also believe that patients have every right to seek whatever kind of therapy they want." The Ontario Medical Association has also decided that the probationary section on complementary medicine should be granted OMA sectional status.

In the United States, more people seek alternative treatment than conventional treatment. That trend is also occurring in Canada. The time has come to ensure freedom of choice for the doctor and freedom of choice for the patient.

QUEEN'S OWN RIFLES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Created on April 26, 1860, when we were the province of Canada, six companies of citizen soldiers were joined by the Militia Act of 1855 to form the 2nd Battalion Volunteer Militia Rifles. In 1863, it became the Queen's Own Rifles of Toronto, and as that regiment it was mobilized in 1866 to thwart the invasion of Canada by the Fenians.

After that success, it distinguished itself in every military conflict in which Canada has been involved, including the Canadian 3rd Division in the Normandy assault on D-Day, June 6, 1944.

The Queen's Own Rifles motto is "In Pace Paratus," "In Peace, Prepared." They have demonstrated their readiness more than adequately over the past 140 years. In the mid-1870s it was called out twice to aid the civil power. It has been involved in peacekeeping duties from Cyprus to Bosnia. Today, as a reserve regiment, it has been assigned an airborne tasking, the only reserve regiment in Canada to receive this responsibility. It was out to assist with natural disasters such as Hurricane Hazel, it manned the armoury for the homeless during the cold winter of 1997, it assisted in the ice storm of 1998 and was on alert for the Y2K emergency.

Their officers have provided great leadership and have included such men as Colonel Gillmor, the first Clerk of this Legislative Assembly. The soldiers of this outstanding regiment are part-time, yet they give of their time and resources to be ready to serve our needs and emergencies at a moment's notice. They deserve our respect and support. We congratulate Lieutenant Colonel Bruce McEachern and his selfless men on this, their 140th year of service to Canadians from coast to coast.

I ask the members to join me in showing our appreciation for their impressive past and commitment to the future of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada.

WATER EXTRACTION

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Last week we heard that 74 water-taking permits are pending on the Trent River. Another 60 permit applications are pending for the York River in Bancroft. Of course, we are all aware of the permit in Centre Hastings that our leader, Dalton McGuinty, highlighted a couple of weeks ago.

At a time when farmers are not sure there will be enough water for their crops, it seems as though the Ministry of the Environment is issuing permits like water. Yet the process does not require municipalities or conservation authorities to be notified directly, or that there is open public discussion about the impact of these permits.

The Tory government has sacrificed the effective management of the environment to provide tax cuts. Cutbacks to regional offices have left capable and committed staff struggling to manage workloads that are impossible.

Ministry of the Environment offices do not track how many water-taking permits are pending in any given area, because they do not have the support staff to effectively monitor this important information. The government has cut this ministry to the bone, and no one is considering the long-range impact.

Water is most certainly one of our most precious resources, and I am absolutely appalled that the Tory government has no priority to track how much of it we are giving away.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): As a member who represents a rural riding, I would like to publicly commend the Premier for his concern for rural communities and the fact that they are not enjoying the benefits of the current economic boom to the same extent as other areas across our province.

The problems presently being experienced in rural communities are unique from those of their urban neighbours. Further, I would suggest that while we often think of rural communities and the business of agriculture as one and the same, they are in fact mutually exclusive. I believe that if we make a distinction between the two, it will help us better understand the plight of rural communities and, as a consequence, devise strategies to help them.

Nowhere is that plight more typical than in the community of Wallaceburg, located in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Heavily dependent on the manufacturing industry, this town of 11,000 has been devastated by the loss of more than 2,000 manufacturing jobs over the past several years, the most significant of which was the closing of the 100-year-old glass factory that gave the community its identity as the Glasstown of Canada. As a result, numerous families have been forced to leave the community to find work.

There is something about the rural way of life that we need not only to hang on to, but embrace, a lifestyle in which the pace is a little slower, a lot less stressful and, most important, where people know one another by name. This way of life is vitally important to maintaining the heritage and traditions of our province and our nation.

Protecting rural Ontario will have a price, but I submit to the members of this House that it is a price worth paying.

P.J. AND M.J. FARRELL

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): How many people in Ontario can say they have delivered over 30,000 babies during their careers? Not many, to say the least. But such is not the case for two brothers from Sudbury.

Drs Patrick and Maurice Farrell can proudly stand in their places and say they have delivered three generations of babies in the Sudbury region over the last 40-plus years. In fact, Dr P.J. Farrell delivered his first baby in 1948 at the old Copper Cliff hospital and his last in 1999 at the St Joseph's Health Centre.

Both P.J. and M.J., as they are fondly referred to in Sudbury, were more than doctors to their patients. They were family, mentors, role models, a shoulder to cry on and people to confide in. They are two people who by every measure truly cared for and about the people they came in contact with.

Tomorrow night, these two pillars of our community will be honoured with the prestigious Paul Harris Rotarian Award. The many hundreds of people who will attend this affair in their honour will reminisce about times that were and how these two individuals affected the lives of so many people.

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Our community of Sudbury and the northeast wish these two men much health and happiness in their retirement. We hope that their happiness in part will be in knowing that the 30,000 people they brought into the world and their families love and appreciate them for not only who they are but what they are. Good luck, M.J., and good health, P.J. We will always be indebted to you for your love of and dedication to your fellow human being.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): One year ago, Cancer Care Ontario began sending southern Ontario cancer patients to the United States and northern Ontario for radiation treatment. On recommendation from Cancer Care Ontario, the Ministry of Health is providing special additional funding to cover 100% of the travel accommodation and food costs for those patients to access treatment elsewhere. This results in blatant discrimination of northern cancer patients. Northern patients must regularly travel far from home to be treated in Sudbury or Thunder Bay, yet the only help they get from the Ministry of Health is coverage of a small portion of travel costs, no money for accommodation or food.

In the face of this inequity, northern Cancer Care Ontario officials decided to lobby this government for a northern program, like the one in place for southern Ontario cancer patients. They want 100% of travel accommodation and food costs covered too. In December 1999, Gerry Lougheed Jr, chair of Cancer Care Ontario's northeast advisory committee, met in Sudbury with northern Ministry of Health staff and was clearly told that such a proposal would be developed. He was promised he would have it by Christmas.

It's four months later, and nothing has come from the Ministry of Health. It's as if the meeting and the commitment made in December never occurred, and so this government continues with its blatant discrimination of northern cancer patients. Not only do northern patients suffer the emotional trauma of cancer treatment, but they face additional trauma wondering if they can afford to stay in Sudbury or Thunder Bay to be treated. There's no excuse in Ontario, in 2000, for northern cancer patients to suffer a financial burden in trying to access cancer care. To the government: Pay these costs now.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr David Young (Willowdale): Too often our newspapers inform us that a child has stolen or vandalized property, threatened or assaulted someone or, worst of all, that one child has deprived another of life. Though these crimes are serious in and of themselves, the fact that they're being committed by children—children who are not old enough to drive, children who are not old enough to vote—makes them all the more disturbing.

This government has led the fight against the increase in youth crime. We have introduced the Safe Streets Act and the Parental Responsibility Act. We've created strict discipline facilities to help youth who have made mistakes get back on track. We have urged the federal government to eliminate conditional sentences and to make the Young Offenders Act a meaningful deterrent to crime. In our schools, the new code of conduct will help reinforce the values of respect for oneself and for others. But at the end of the day, the solution to youth crime lies largely within our own families and our communities.

In May, Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino will be holding a series of meetings across Toronto in an effort to hear from parents and other members of the community on how best to tackle the problem of youth crime and other crimes in our community. I invite everyone who shares my concerns to attend the meeting with Chief Fantino being held in my riding, Willowdale, on Monday, May 29, from 7 pm to 9 pm at the North York council chambers. Our children have the right to grow up without fear of violence, and we as a community owe it to them to work toward this goal.

ORGAN DONOR AWARENESS WEEK

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): As part of Organ Donor Awareness Week, tonight the Kidney Foundation of Windsor and District will be offering a Celebration of Courage, which is a candlelight celebration to pay tribute to donors and their families on their courageous gift of life. Yesterday, all of us had the opportunity to speak about organ donors and the importance of organ donation in Ontario, and I especially wanted to pay tribute to those in our community who have done so much for this important cause.

The multi-faith service is being held today at 7 pm at the Salvation Army South Windsor Citadel on Grand Marais Road West. I invite my constituents and people throughout our city to join in that.

I also want to pay special tribute to Anne Brinkman, who was the peer support and patient services supervisor with the local chapter of the Kidney Foundation, for all her great efforts on behalf of this important issue.

Finally, to my colleagues in the Legislature: In our constituency office we've been able now to obtain organ donor cards which can be made available in your offices. I would urge all of you to avail yourselves of that service. You need to call Organ Donation Ontario, 1-800-263-2833, to participate in this very important program.

I think all of us in this House and indeed throughout the province know of someone who has a need for or has benefited from this program. It's incumbent on all of us to join in a non-partisan fashion in promoting organ donation especially this week, but throughout the year.

PROVINCIAL DEBT

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Last week I had the opportunity to meet with Wellesley township council in my riding about the next budget and Ontario's future fiscal priorities. One of the issues raised at my meeting was the need to deal with the \$120-billion provincial debt the previous government had left to our children and grandchildren. My constituents in Waterloo-Wellington believe that the provincial debt is among the most pressing problems in Ontario today.

Back in 1997, they supported my private member's resolution which called upon the government to commit itself to a long-term debt repayment plan with interim targets to begin paying down our massive debt. My resolution passed in the House. For the past three years, I've continued to raise this issue with the Minister of Finance and the government.

In my recent survey of my constituents in Waterloo-Wellington, a whopping 64% said paying down the debt should be the most important fiscal priority for Ontario once the budget is balanced. Doug Robson, president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, shares this view, saying recently, "We are in good times and the rule in good times is that you pay down your debts."

I want to congratulate the Premier and the Minister of Finance for their recent statements suggesting that a debt repayment plan will likely be included in the next provincial budget. Let us begin to secure the future of our children and grandchildren and guarantee their prosperity by beginning to pay down our provincial debt.

SPECIAL REPORT,
INFORMATION AND PRIVACY
COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today I've laid upon the table a special report of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario submitted by Ann Cavoukian, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario.

On a point of order, the member for Hamilton West.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Mr Speaker, my point of order is with regard to the report that you've just tabled. Given the fact that it's a stunning report that speaks of the government actually violating the law, we in the NDP request unanimous consent to have an emergency debate about this most important, crucial issue that affects Ontarians in terms of their rights to privacy.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I also beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the seventh report of the standing committee on government agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

E-COMMERCE ACT, 2000 LOI DE 2000 SUR LE COMMERCE ÉLECTRONIQUE

Mr Hastings moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 70, An Act with respect to Electronic Information, Documents and Payments / Projet de loi 70, Loi concernant les renseignements, les documents et les paiements électroniques.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.
The member for a short statement.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): The E-Commerce Act, 2000, has the legal effect and enforceability that information or documents may not be denied just because the information is in an electronic form. Subject to specified limits, where a law requires that information or a document be in writing or that a document be signed, the information or document may be provided electronically and the document signed electronically.

Furthermore, the bill recognizes contracts formed as the result of specified electronic exchanges and allows for errors arising from transactions with electronic agents to be corrected.

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MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I believe I have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to

the ballot list for private members' public business: Mrs Papatello and Mr Kennedy exchange places in order of precedence such that Mrs Papatello assumes ballot item number 25 and Mr Kennedy assumes ballot item number 38; Mrs Boyer and Mr Bartolucci exchange places in order of precedence such that Mrs Boyer assumes ballot item number 55 and Mr Bartolucci assumes ballot item number 24.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

It's now time for oral questions.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We were given to understand the Chair of Management Board would be here. Oh, here he is now.

The Speaker: We'll give him a moment to find his seat.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. In January 1998, the ORC advertised for sale some cemetery land located in Etobicoke. It wasn't worth that much because there was no way for vehicles to get to the vacant part of the lot at the back, so most bidders lost interest. But one bidder worked behind the scenes and struck a secret deal with the government. A strip of land was added to this original piece of land that would allow construction of a roadway extending to the back of the land, a roadway that makes the construction of a \$25-million crematorium now possible.

Can you tell us today, Minister, what role you and your office played in secretly turning a cemetery into a gold mine for one bidder and one bidder alone?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm not aware of the details on that.

Mr McGuinty: I'm going to have a page who's conveniently right here take this over to the minister. Thank you, Marc.

I'm providing you, Minister, with a copy of a document we obtained through a freedom of information act request. One of these documents, the one I provided you with just now, you might want to call a smoking gun because it implicates you directly. It's a handwritten note from an ORC official which says, and I quote, "There has been ministerial involvement." Ministerial involvement—that's you, Minister—in a secret deal to turn a cemetery into a gold mine.

You've been telling us for weeks that you have nothing whatsoever to do with the day-to-day affairs of the ORC, that you do not get involved in the bids, that that is not your responsibility, that you're there to protect taxpayers. Can you tell us then, please, Minister, what

does this ministerial involvement mean in this particular deal?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'm not sure of the details around this, but from this note it could possibly mean that one of your caucus members has phoned and asked for information and that we've requested the ORC. It says here in your own note that they want to have a briefing, that John Bell, who was the president of the ORC at the time, has been asked to get some information to the minister's office. That must mean that somebody has made an MPP inquiry, or somebody has inquired about the status of the project. That's quite common. I get calls from your caucus members all the time asking about the status of a piece of property or a lease or a building. But I don't know the particulars on this, and I'd be pleased to look into it.

Mr McGuinty: There is no reference here to some kind of request or ministerial request. It says "ministerial involvement." It specifically says there has been ministerial involvement. What we're talking about here—and let's go back to the issue at hand—are two things. First of all, you said you don't get involved in these things. Secondly, we have a piece of property that was put out for public tender and, secretly, behind closed doors, the person who got the deal suddenly has added to it a strip of land, which increases the value of the property close to a hundredfold. We get some information from the freedom of information office, and they provide us with a note that says there has been ministerial involvement. This stench, Minister, is not going to go away. It's like a stink on an elevator that you just can't get rid of. It's there again and again.

Minister, when only one developer is given access to key information, when only one developer is told he can bid on additional land, as was the case here, and when a minister gets personally involved in a secret land deal, can you tell us how this is not bid-rigging?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The leader of the opposition, who is a lawyer, knows better than this. He's just trying to throw all the allegations and all the crap he can in the hope that some of it will stick.

I'm pleased you have sent over some information that can be investigated. We will have this turned over to the internal and external auditors, and if there's evidence they'll refer it to the police. That's what we've done in past cases, and that's what we will continue to do. I expect that you and other members of this House would agree that that is the proper course of action. You have to find the evidence and, when you do, refer it to the police. That's what I expect any member in this Legislature would do, and that's what we've been doing on behalf of the taxpayers.

Your briefing note talks about how they're going to brief the president of the ORC, John Bell, because somebody got a request for information from my office. I'll look into that, and we'll turn this information over to the auditor.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, we're talking about a matter that is very straightforward. You have said countless

times in the past that you don't get involved in these deals. Here is a specific deal where somebody succeeded in secretly having a strip of land added to the original piece of property. The original strip of land was not put out for public tender, and suddenly this individual gets a piece of property that has now increased a hundredfold in value.

We obtained a piece of paper, a handwritten note by an ORC official, which says there has been ministerial involvement. That's you. You involved yourself in this deal, Minister. You told us that you never get involved in these deals. You significantly changed the value of this property and, by so doing, abdicated your responsibility to the taxpayers of Ontario. Minister, why were you even involved in this deal in the first place?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'm not aware of the details of this particular transaction. I can assure this House that I'm not involved in the day-to-day operations. However, our office is involved in referring requests from MPPs and other people who have questions on the status of a process involved in a transaction. For example, if one of your caucus members phoned our office and said, "Can you tell us the details," we would ask the ORC to prepare a briefing note to do that. That's what this note says. They have to brief the president of the ORC, who has to prepare a briefing for the minister's office.

Mr McGuinty: If the minister has some kind of reasonable explanation, I'm sure he will be quite prepared to turn over those documents and make it perfectly clear. But from my perspective, Minister, you should know that I'm turning over this evidence to the police. They're the people—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister of Education, this is your last warning. If you yell again, I'm going to ask you to leave. Leader of the official opposition.

1400

Mr McGuinty: Let me read the note to you again, Minister. It says: "Brian said there's been ministerial involvement. I had to brief John Bell," who's with the ORC, "on this today, and the minister's EA." You were involved in the sale of this land, Minister. I'm blowing the whistle and I'm blowing it on you. You've been telling us that the Pope should be declaring you a saint in this matter because you're the one who's acted in the most saintly way possible when it comes to these land flips in Ontario. Now there is solid, concrete, hard evidence of your involvement in the sale of a specific piece of land. Minister, why don't you do the right thing in all of this and resign?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The Leader of the Opposition has stooped to a new low today. He's trying to make up evidence. He's trying to take credit for calling in the police when he knows full well it's this government, this ministry and this minister that have called in the police, that has led to the investigation to try to see if there's evidence of any wrongdoing or criminal behaviour in the ORC. I told him in my previous answer that we would

refer this issue to the auditor and to the police. So he's standing up trying to take credit for something that we have already done or undertaken to do. If that's not the epitome of hypocrisy, I have no idea where he gets off with his principles.

Mr McGuinty: You're the one who's been trying to take credit for guarding the interests of Ontario taxpayers and everything points to the exact opposite of that. The fact of the matter is that you have completely failed to live up to your responsibility to protect the interests of Ontario taxpayers.

We knew that government land was being sold at rock-bottom prices. We knew that taxpayers in this province were getting ripped off to the tune of millions and millions of dollars. We knew that there were special deals and secret deals. But today we discovered for the very first time that this minister is involved in the centre of it all.

Once again, Minister, I'll be turning this information over to the police today, and I'm asking you to do the right thing: Resign and devote your time to doing something that you have failed to do to date, that is, assist the police in uncovering the truth in this matter.

Hon Mr Hodgson: The Leader of the Opposition talks about facts and assisting in the investigation to get to the bottom of it. He knows full well that we've done the right thing by calling in the auditors, by having the police come in and investigate. But we need to have real facts. We can't go on his scurrilous innuendo that the taxpayers have lost money. That hasn't been proven yet. That's why we got the police involved, to try to find out whether or not there's been any wrongdoing.

The only fact that is known for sure about real estate in this province is the mismanagement under your regime on the Ataratiri lands, which, for a fact, cost the taxpayers of this province \$340 million, which would have provided for a tremendous number of long-term-care beds, MRI beds, emergency ward visits. That's the disgraceful legacy that you squandered when you were in government. That's the only fact that's known for sure.

We are trying to get to the bottom of all the questions involved around the ORC and its past deals—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

SPECIAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): My question is to the Minister of Finance. You will know that the privacy commissioner has tabled a report with the House today entitled A Special Report to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on the Disclosure of Personal Information by the Province of Ontario Savings Office, Ministry of Finance.

Minister, this is a shocking exposé of a government that has broken the law, misused personal information in pursuit of its privatization agenda and is now engaged in

a massive cover-up. The finance ministry in fact tried to smother this investigation before it even started. Nobody from the privatization secretariat, all the way up to the CEO, would answer a single question. Documents provided by the finance ministry were censored, blacked out to protect who knows what information from the privacy commissioner. Because of your stonewalling, we don't know who in government, or indeed who in cabinet, approved these violations of our laws and we don't know who was directing the cover-up or why. Minister, what is your response to this scathing indictment of your government's mistreatment of the private, personal information of the people of Ontario?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): First of all, I have had an opportunity this morning, obviously, to go over the report that came from the commissioner. We accept the commissioner's report entirely and we are acting upon her recommendations. We have already satisfied or fulfilled four of the seven recommendations, and I can assure the honourable member that the other three will be satisfied by July 31 of this year.

Mr Christopherson: Minister, that is not nearly enough, and I think you know that. The commissioner has stated in the report that her office cannot continue the investigation that she believes needs to be continued, and says so directly in the report, because she doesn't have the authority.

Minister, if you are so keen on meeting the questions and obligations that the privacy commissioner raises, then let me pose this to you: Will you agree to table legislation that empowers the commissioner in the way she asks so that she can get to the bottom of this cover-up, or will you call a public inquiry into why your government has taken the actions it has? Let me say to you, anything other than that means that your answer today is just one more step in this massive cover-up.

Hon Mr Eves: There is no cover-up, number one. Number two, though, I would like to say very directly to the honourable member that this government has no difficulty with referring the entire act to a committee of this Legislature for review. It has not been reviewed since 1991 despite the fact, I might add, that the commissioner's predecessor requested your government to do that and you refused. We, on the other hand, believe we are taking the commissioner's report to heart. We accept the recommendations of the commissioner and we have no problem with taking the entire act and sending it out to a legislative committee for the entire act to be reviewed so that we can act, not only upon the commissioner's recommendations but deal with other aspects of the act as well.

Mr Christopherson: With regard to the fact that these recommendations were made before and our government didn't act on them, you're right, we should have. Who would have imagined, though, that a government of any political stripe would do the things that you have done with regard to personal information in this modern era? Saying that we didn't do it is not enough; we agree with

you that we should have done it. Saying that it can go to a committee is a diversionary tactic that we have no interest in.

Let me quote from the report. "The ministry's efforts to limit our investigation and its failure, in our view, to use its best efforts to ensure that its current and former employees co-operated with us has hindered this investigation." Further, "Co-operation has been difficult to obtain on occasion, but we have never before faced the level of difficulty or the number of obstacles experienced in this investigation."

Further quotes: "Despite our inquiries, we have been offered no explanation for these dramatically different approaches. As a consequence, we do not feel that the public interest has been adequately served." Lastly: "All of the questions surrounding the 1997 disclosure of POSO account holder information have not been answered, nor have all of the relevant facts been determined. This is unacceptable to us. It should be unacceptable to the government." Let me say to you, it's certainly unacceptable to us in the NDP.

Minister, bring in the legislation immediately. We'll pass it with unanimous consent. Give the commissioner the power she needs to get to the bottom of this, and we'll ensure that the people of Ontario have their private information protected in a way you failed to do.

Hon Mr Eves: Let me say very directly to the honourable member that the officials in the privatization secretariat at the time operated with the best of intentions. They operated upon, first of all, a verbal opinion from the freedom of information official in the ministry, and secondly, they operated upon a written legal opinion. They had a different interpretation, I would concede, than the commissioner has now come to. But if there was a mistake made by those officials, it was certainly an honest mistake made by those officials, and we are accepting fully the commissioner's recommendations.

As I said to the honourable member in response to his previous supplementary, we have no problem with the entire act being reviewed. I have no doubt that some changes will have to be made to the legislation, and should be made to the legislation, in very direct response to what the commissioner is suggesting.

1410

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Minister, you keep saying that you and Tony Miele are cleaning up the Ontario Realty Corp when in fact the reality is quite different. You're still doing deals with the companies that ripped you off before. You're doing this while an internal audit and a police investigation are underway.

This is a printout of properties currently listed for sale on the ORC Web site. There are three listed as under contract. The value of two of them totals over \$12 million. Minister, will you table here today the names of

the companies with which the ORC has land under contract?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): As I've stated on numerous occasions, the Ontario Realty Corp board of directors has put into place a new set of policies and procedures to guide them and to guide the corporation in its transactions around real estate sales. It's more open; it's more transparent. The fact that it's on the Internet with the policies is a huge improvement. Using outside professional brokers is a huge improvement which has allowed for competitive tendering, to make sure that properly qualified companies conduct the real estate transactions.

Your question is quite specific. I will find out if there's any legal reason why I can't release that and we'll try to get that to you.

Mr Martin: In the spirit of your answer, Minister, why won't you table it here today? You obviously seem to know everything about all of this, and your answer is simply unacceptable. You need to come clean with the people of Ontario. Yesterday the Premier denied that the ORC is still doing deals with Frank Gabriele even though the company's own lawyer and the ORC's own court documents say otherwise.

Alan Price, lawyer for Amberwood, the company that ripped off the ORC in 1998, told TVOntario on April 7 that he was doing another deal with the ORC for a property at McCowan and Ellesmere in Scarborough, and interestingly enough, one of the properties under contract is a \$6.5-million property at McCowan and Ellesmere in Scarborough. Minister, why are you still doing deals with Amberwood after they ripped you off in 1998?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Unfortunately, on the government side we don't have the luxury—we have to have evidence. We can't just falsely accuse people without the evidence. We've asked for a process that will get to the bottom of this and answer all the questions. That's why we've got the external auditors, the internal auditors, as well as the police doing a review. On top of that, for any pending transactions, the senior management team, along with the accountants and the auditors, will review all the data and make a determination whether this deal should close, which is under legal contract, at the time.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, Premier Harris extolled the virtues of your record on organ donation. Indeed, I quote from his comments yesterday, "We need more donors."

Mrs Karen Adams is in the gallery today, and I would like to describe her struggle in trying to donate an organ. Karen is a potential match to donate a kidney to her sister-in-law. Because her husband is receiving a disability pension, your government claws back all she earns at her part-time job except for the first \$160 a month. If she donates, during her eight-week recovery every penny of her unemployment insurance will be deducted. Mrs

Adams cannot pay her bills without this extra income. ODSP suggested that the organ recipient should reimburse her for the money.

Minister, why did it take a fear of bad publicity for ODSP to make a one-time-only exemption? For \$320 your government was prepared to block an organ donation. Why is your government not making it easy for someone to donate?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I will refer that to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Obviously, our objective in setting up the Ontario disability support program is to provide a good income support program to people with disabilities. We're always concerned when we hear of cases like the one the member opposite described. I would certainly commit to look into the issue and to make a policy change if it is warranted. Obviously, the case of someone experiencing that kind of trouble is of great concern to anyone, and we would certainly be prepared to look into it.

Mr Parsons: That was somewhat of a wishy-washy answer. Not only has the surgery been delayed because of your government's policies, but now Karen is told that there will be no doctor available until at least the end of summer. Not only that, but the surgery may not happen at all, because the recipient family must first prove they can pay for the anti-rejection drugs for the rest of their life.

Minister, the recipient spends nine hours every night, plus lunch hour, hooked up to her dialysis machine. This operation would improve her life and that of her family. Your organ donor program appears to be tied directly to family income. Why is your government not supporting Karen's and similar families, and will you commit to meeting with Karen after question period to hear her story first-hand?

Hon Mr Baird: As I indicated to the member opposite, I would certainly be prepared to look into this issue. I regularly get suggestions from members on both sides of the House on how we can provide better programs for people with disabilities.

The member opposite read a scripted answer, saying he didn't like the answer to my question. It was obviously written before question period. The member opposite may have a difficult time taking yes for an answer, but we would be pleased to look into the issue and see what can be done.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Much rumour and innuendo has been circulating on the other side of the House about the state of Ontario's colleges and universities. I know that you recently announced the largest expansion of our post-secondary

system in close to 30 years to accommodate the double cohort in 2003. You have also said on many occasions that when the new students arrive there will be adequate training and funding in place to support them.

Some on the other side of the House, however, have claimed that Ontario universities are last in operating funding across Canada. Yet, according to Maclean's magazine, Ontario has three of the top five institutions in the country, and an international reputation for excellence.

Minister, can you clear up this confusion coming from the other side of the House and tell us the real story with regard to operating funds available to our colleges and universities?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister? I think the minister may have missed it. What we will do, if we could, is stop the clock. If you could make it a bit shorter, the minister didn't hear the question.

Mr Coburn: Minister, in short, because of the misinterpretation and misunderstanding on the other side of the House, can you clear up some of the confusion with respect to appropriate funding and the real story with regard to operating funds available to our colleges and universities?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): My apologies to my colleagues. Yes, I would be happy to explain this to members on the other side of the House.

It is a fact that we have the most accessible post-secondary education system in Canada, and perhaps in North America. For the last several years—for the last 20 years, to be exact—it has been said that Ontario ranks between seventh and 10th in operating funds. The fact is, when you put in all the resources that go into operating funds, we rank fourth in Canada. That may not be good enough, but it isn't last. We're very much better than that. Not only that; we are spending \$301 per student above and beyond the national average. So our students are well funded in operating dollars.

I will say also that we have taken care of the fact that the members opposite, as part of two governments, let the—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Coburn: It is kind of difficult to hear in here whenever they have raised the issue and we're trying to answer it.

Minister, one of the most important features of our colleges and universities system is how accessible it is for Ontario students. Indeed, you've often said, and our platform has promised, that every willing and qualified Ontario student will continue to be able to attend college or university.

We all know that as the demand for post-secondary education increases, ensuring access to our colleges and universities will become even more important. Minister, what are you doing to ensure access for students, and what evidence do we have that this government has been and will continue to be successful in ensuring that a

college or university education remains within reach for Ontario students?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: In response to my colleague, I think everyone in this House knows about the challenge of some 88,000 new students we are expecting in the next 14 years. Certainly, more immediately, in 2003 we'll have a number of students.

1420

First of all, we've built the buildings. This year alone, with the private sector's support we put \$1.4 billion into new construction. My colleague asks about operating dollars: We're fourth in Canada. We are above the national average in operating costs, and we have done more than any other government, to the tune of \$697 million, to support students on tuition, and I'll mention two ways. Over and above OSAP, we have an Ontario student opportunity trust fund, and that means the private sector in this province, university by university, college by college, have offered up more than \$300 million to support students, and we have matched those funds, one of the most successful programs in Canada.

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is again to the Chair of Management Board. Returning to the matter I raised with you just a few moments ago, I have in my hand a formal letter of complaint sent by Comwest Properties Inc on March 16 of this year to the Ontario Realty Corp. It turns out that this corporation also had a very real interest in this same piece of property. They write, among other things, the following, and they are talking about this 25-foot strip of land that was added to the property: "This 25-foot strip is critical to any decision to purchase the property because it provides the sole means of access into the site without disturbing existing burial plots. Ontario Realty Corp never advertised the 25-foot strip as being available for purchase." This man goes on to say that he would have put in a formal bid had he known this additional strip of land would have been available because it increases the economic potential of the same piece of property 100-fold.

We have a formal letter of complaint filed by an Ontario citizen who was interested in purchasing this land. We have another copy of a letter here signed by an ORC official, his handwritten note I raised earlier that talks about ministerial involvement in this matter. Do you still maintain, Minister, that you had nothing whatsoever to do with this land deal? Do you still maintain that you, in all of this—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member's time is up.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I've already undertaken to get the information that the Leader of the Opposition has requested. I can assure him, though, that we've begun a process of having the audit team review all past transactions, and if there are any irregularities, they'll refer it to the provincial police to do an investigation. We will

get to the bottom of these important questions that are being asked, and this is the proper process to do it through.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I want to return to this letter and your refusal to take it for what it is, which is a very, very serious matter.

I quote again: "Had the Ontario Realty Corp disclosed to me that the 25-foot strip was available, there is no question in my mind that I would have made an offer for the purchase of the property. I also believe that other parties would have made offers had they known the true facts. Obviously, due to his connections, the circumstances unfairly favoured the buyer, a Mr Damiani. We cannot help but wonder what relationship Mr Damiani has with the Ontario Realty Corp."

Minister, we've got a letter here filed by an Ontario company saying they were shut out of the process. We have a note filed by a member of the ORC staff telling us that there has been, in this matter, ministerial involvement. There's no longer any smoke; we have a huge fire before us. Why don't you, given the real, hard evidence before this House today, do the right thing and resign?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I can only be thankful on behalf of the people of Ontario that you're not in a position like a judge if that's your real, hard evidence. What you have is a commitment from this minister that we will refer this matter to the audit team and that if there's anything irregular about it, it will be referred to the police. That's the proper course to go. We want to get to the bottom of it. These are important questions that you're raising, and that's what we will take a look at.

In terms of your briefing note, what it states is that the minister's office needs to be briefed on it. It could be because a caucus member or a member in this assembly, one of your caucus colleagues, asked for information on it back in 1998. I can assure this House, though, that this deal was conducted back two years ago, and with the new open and transparent procedures this should not happen. The property should be open and transparent when it's marketed, and marketed by professionals.

So I appreciate the question. I will refer it to the audit team. If there are irregularities—

The Speaker: New question.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. It's come to my attention that in southwestern Ontario there's a particular need for increased attention for children's mental health issues. I have read in newspaper articles dating back a couple of months now that the situation is of great concern to the providers of these services. In the Windsor area, for instance, Connie Martin of Maryvale Adolescent and Family Services referred to the situation as a serious crisis, saying, "It's never been worse than this." The issue has also been raised in this House before.

I understand you have been looking into the situation and have recently met with the providers of these ser-

vices. Minister, can you tell us what the outcome of the meeting was and anything you have done to deal with the pressing situation?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my colleague from southwestern Ontario for the question on what is a very important issue.

Our government has worked hard to address the issues faced by families with children suffering from mental health problems and challenges. We're certainly very committed to providing them, both the families and the children themselves, with the supports they need.

I certainly have an understanding of the challenges and service pressures in the Windsor-Essex area. That's why I was committed to taking some swift action. I was able to have the opportunity to meet with key providers of children's mental health services in Windsor-Essex—representatives from the Hotel-Dieu, the Windsor Regional Children's Centre and Maryvale Adolescent and Family Services—some time ago. I asked for a proposal back from them with our regional office within 10 days and committed to turn it around within 72 hours. I'm happy to inform the House that this commitment was met and we've already begun to flow more than \$850,000 to help address the mental health service pressures for children in Windsor-Essex.

This funding was part—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Beaubien: Minister, you mentioned \$850,000 for the Windsor-Essex area. Can you assure me that the amount you're investing in this area will be sufficient to address the issues raised by the providers of these services?

Hon Mr Baird: I recognize that the service pressures in Windsor-Essex weren't created overnight and they won't be solved overnight, but our government is committed to working with the region in the long term to help improve services for children with mental health problems. We'll be able to provide support for mobile crisis services, community stabilization beds, in-school supports and intensive family intervention.

Connie Martin, the executive director of the Maryvale centre, said: "We are extremely pleased with the ... quick response to the crisis in our community. The funding will help us respond quickly to suicidal children who arrive at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital in crisis."

I want to particularly thank one member opposite for all the work she did in bringing this issue to my attention. She worked very hard in apprising us of the situation and we went to work. I want to thank the member for Beaches-Woodbine for bringing this issue to my attention.

HUNTING IN WILDERNESS PARKS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Deputy Premier. Your Minister of Natural Resources has consistently tried to deny that a backroom

deal was cut with a special interest group to open up Ontario's wilderness parks for hunting. On February 9, Minister Snobelen said he denied, and I quote, "absolutely, completely and without equivocation" that the government pledge to open up the parks to hunting was the result of a private deal with the federation.

But today a letter finally released under freedom of information contradicts your minister. In fact, on March 29, 1999, your minister wrote to Mr Rick Morgan, executive vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, and confirmed and I quote: "On numerous occasions you have reviewed with me your position that hunting should be allowed in existing wilderness class parks. We agree to amend the individual park plans such that hunting can be allowed in wilderness parks where there is demonstrated local public support for it."

Deputy, will you admit today that your government did indeed reverse public policy with respect to Ontario's wilderness parks and that there was no consultation with the exception of one special interest group?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): No, I say to the honourable member, I will not. It has always been part of the publicly stated goals in Lands for Life to increase opportunities for hunting and fishing. It was one of the original goals stated very publicly, very up front in Lands for Life. However, the honourable member will be pleased to know that no hunting will be permitted in the 88 natural reserve class parks in Ontario. I understand that the Ontario Parks Board is meeting today, as a matter of fact, to discuss how much hunting and fishing should or should not be allowed in other parks in Ontario.

1430

Ms Martel: Deputy Premier, there was absolutely no reference to hunting in wilderness parks in Lands for Life or in Living Legacy. It's just not correct to say that.

It's very clear from the correspondence that was released today that a special deal was cut with a special interest group, without any kind of public consultation. But what is worse is that in the document released today it's clear that this special deal is even bigger than we thought. Specifically, under Living Legacy your government created 13 natural reserves where hunting is not permitted, and those reserves represent a mere 2% of the total park area you created where hunting is not allowed. But in the minister's letter released today, it is clear that even this dismal 2% of lands is now up for grabs for hunting. Your minister confirms that the nature reserves, supposedly protected under Living Legacy, will be considered for hunting too.

Deputy Premier, you're now going to allow hunting in wilderness parks, and now your minister wants to change the designation for the natural reserves to allow hunting there too. There's been absolutely no public consultation about these changes in public policy. When is your government going to consult with all Ontarians, and not just one special interest group, about where and when hunting will be allowed in Ontario?

Hon Mr Eves: Let me respond to every one of her points. With respect to the Ontario Lands for Life land

use strategy on the MNR Web site, I quote: "...consider in future park management planning for existing provincial parks, the opportunity to provide additional hunting opportunities. Where there is demonstrated local public support for hunting in existing wilderness parks, this will be addressed as part of planning for individual parks." There it is, stated very clearly, very up front, as part of public policy.

I have told her that hunting will not be permitted in 88 natural reserve class parks in Ontario. Hunting in parks in Ontario is not new. As a matter of fact, in previous administrations, both Liberal and NDP, hunting was permitted in 67 of 272 parks in Ontario.

Furthermore, the last point, if there are any changes to current guidelines for wilderness class parks, they will be posted under the Environmental Bill of Rights and there will be full public hearings. So what is your problem?

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY EMPLOYEES

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is to the Minister of Correctional Services. We're joined in the House today by 125 correctional officers who work for the province of Ontario, individuals who literally put their lives on the line every day, keeping Ontario citizens safe. The professional way in which they do their job can never be questioned. They deserve and have our respect, and we on this side say, thank you.

A few months ago, Minister, you stated in this House, "Safety and security for those who work inside and around the institution is our top priority." Minister, as you hurl the province towards the for-profit privatization of our public and accountable correctional facilities, these front-line professionals are telling you that their safety and the safety of the communities in which they work, live and play, will be jeopardized as a result of for-profit private institutions.

Minister, will you today commit to listening to the combined 1,800 years of experience in this House and stop your ideologically driven move towards for-profit privatization?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I welcome the men and women who work for the Ministry of Correctional Services to the House today to watch this question period. I say to them that I am equally concerned about not only their public safety and their safety within their institutions and the homes and communities where they live, but also the homes and communities that are around the various institutions in this province. That is why, just after I was appointed minister, I felt it was important for me to spend the time to go out to the various institutions in this province—and I think I've seen about a third of them—and speak to the men and women who are working on the front-line services and find out their concerns and their challenges. And there are many as they try to deal with their jobs and try to provide an effective and efficient system in this province.

What I heard was that we have, and I agree, very fine men and women working in this ministry, but it's a system, in many regards, that's keeping them from doing the best they can in their job. It's that system change that I'm trying to address in the reform in corrections, system change such as infrastructure changes where we are trying to get rid of institutions that were built before this country became a country and in which these men and women are forced to function. We need to change that infrastructure so we get—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Levac: Thank you for the non-answer. Minister, on several occasions you have been asked to sit down with the province's correctional officers and talk to them about cost savings and efficiencies, cost savings and efficiencies that we believe can be achieved by replacing two professional correctional officers with one private \$9-an-hour security guard to conduct escorts in our community.

I ask you today, in front of those who deliver those services and put their lives on the line every day, will you commit to a real consultation and negotiation with the correctional officers in order to achieve those changes without jeopardizing safety before you move this province toward that iceberg I referred to earlier, a move that has proven to be a public safety threat in every single jurisdiction where privatization has been introduced?

Hon Mr Sampson: I want to make it quite clear that the only individual who has been talking in this House about replacing correctional officers with—what was it?—an \$8-an-hour single person has been you, sir. If that's what you support as changes for corrections, I'm afraid I don't accept that. What I accept—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sampson: I clearly must have hit a sore spot, because they're quite agitated over there.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock for a moment, please.

Minister of Correctional Services, continue, please.

Hon Mr Sampson: What I will not accept in this province is a correctional system that handcuffs the men and women in this ministry from doing their job effectively and efficiently and functionally. What I will not accept is a system that is costing the taxpayers the second-highest costs in this province. That was by the auditor. What I will not accept is a system that is forcing the employees to produce results that I know can be much better. I know the employees who work for this ministry can deliver much better results. I am looking forward to working with them to deliver on those standards with full public accountability so we can stand up on our feet in this House and be fully proud and completely proud, all of us, of the job that we are doing in this province. I intend to do that, and I know the fine men and women who work—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. I have taken great interest in the livelihood of my local community, and in particular the future of the Barnum House Museum. While I'm committed to doing what I can to help improve the economic environment of my riding and historic sites such as the Barnum House, I'm concerned that not enough is being done to help preserve the history and the unique culture of rural and small-town Ontario. I believe we can protect our local culture and our local history by promoting rural museums and rural heritage centres.

What is your ministry doing to make sure these museums in rural and small-town Ontario don't close their doors? Do they have our government's support?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank my colleague the member for Northumberland. I'd also like to say what a terrific job I think he's doing as parliamentary assistant to rural affairs. I know therefore that he's very concerned about rural communities across the province. I'd like to make my commitment to rural communities also. I'd like to say that there are a number of initiatives that the government has been working on with respect to both heritage facilities and museums.

Let me once again remind him that in last year's budget the government announced the heritage challenge fund, a \$10-million program which is matching funds to ensure that our heritage sites all across the province have funds for long-term restoration.

1440

I'd also like to say that the community museum operating grants total \$3 million in this province. They've been allocated to 167 museums in the province, and this year 10 new museums were made eligible for first-time application.

Mr Galt: Thank you, Minister, for those very kind words. I'm pleased to see that there is indeed help on the way. However, many of these museums and heritage centres depend on volunteers, and thank heaven for volunteers in our communities. A full-time curator may be just fine for Toronto, for big cities, but it really doesn't fit in with rural Ontario. The needs of rural Ontario are indeed different. Museums and heritage centres in small-town Ontario need our help to survive. In order to ensure fair funding is coming from your ministry, can you ensure that rural museums and heritage centres don't have to abide by the same operating standards as those in the cities?

Hon Mrs Johns: In 1997 the Provincial Auditor said in one of his reports that we had to have provincial standards for museums, and I think we all agree that's important. What happened at the time was that we set a criterion which involved six different elements, and only four of those elements had to be met for museums to be able to obtain funding. One of those elements was a full-

time curator, so if a museum chooses not to have a full-time curator, they can still do that and receive funding from the ministry.

It's very important for us to recognize that in lots of communities we don't have full-time museums—we even have seasonable museums across the province—and we're trying to be flexible in that. That's why we chose that only four of the six criteria would have to be met to allow that to happen. On top of meeting only four of the six criteria, they had to have an overall grade of 50% to be able to obtain the funding.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION
FUNDING

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Your government has repeatedly promised space in our colleges and universities for all qualified and motivated students. I have as my guests a number of qualified and motivated students in the members' gallery. The reality, however, is that the rising cost of a post-secondary education is forcing many students from low-income families to give up this dream or to start a new career with an unprecedented amount of debt.

Studies are piling up from universities all across the province that show that the percentage of students from low socio-economic backgrounds is steadily falling and declining, and this at a time of great economic prosperity in Ontario. A study from the University of Guelph—the author is in the gallery—indicates that in less than 10 years the percentage of students from low-income families has dropped from 40% to 16%. Similar studies from the University of Western Ontario and the University of Waterloo show the same trend.

Your 2% increase in tuition doesn't help these students, Minister—not after your government has increased tuition by over 50%. And we are not fourth out of 10 provinces; we are ninth out of 10 in provincial funding, and 59th out of 60 provinces and states. Please have your facts straight, Minister. In light of this evidence, will you commit today to an immediate freeze on all post-secondary tuition fees, and commit to providing the necessary reinvestment to our post-secondary institutions to at least match the Canadian average for post-secondary funding?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I think we should be proud here in Ontario that we have the largest accessibility ever for students to our post-secondary system: 35% of 18- to 24-year-olds, and that is growing, attend our universities. In favour of that remark, it was 25% for the NDP and 23% for the Liberals. At the same time, we have increased opportunities for our young people by making sure the student support is there for them, and 30% of the tuition that has been increased is set aside to help these students. We have a student opportunity grant. Over \$600 million in our post-secondary system is there to help our students; \$300 million of that has been provided by the—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Minister, part of those statistics are reflected in the demographics, not in increases to accessibility. It is not enough to claim that you will provide a space to every willing and motivated student if you're not willing to back up that claim with financial support. Let me put a real face on the issue of access to our colleges and universities.

On a recent trip to Loyalist College we met Chris Souci, who is in the gallery, an outstanding student, the former president of his students' council. In September he will be unable to return to college to finish his college degree. Why not? He simply can't afford to. He is qualified, he is motivated, he is studying computer programming, a field your government is interested in, but he is not eligible for OSAP, nor will the bank lend him any more money, so he is leaving school already \$25,000 in debt.

All these cards for the Premier are from Queen's University students, stating their debts. They range anywhere from \$3,000 to \$40,000, as well as one student saying: "I'm middle-class poor. I was rejected." Minister, this is the reality of access to post-secondary education in your government's Ontario. Will you take the necessary steps to make access to a college education a reality for Chris? Will you live up to your commitment of accessibility for all qualified and motivated students or—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the member's time is up. Minister.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: In response to the honourable member's question, I think it's extremely important that we let the students in the gallery know—I welcome them here and I know many of them myself. I've just heard the story of the young man from Loyalist College. I feel badly that he may have made that decision not having been given all of the opportunities that are there before him. I find the question surprising after the answer to the first question that I responded to. In fact, we have reduced tuition to an increase of just 2% this year, and that's after 10% every single year by the Liberal government and 10% by the NDP government. They in fact increased tuition over 50% during their tenure, and over 30% during their tenure.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Will the minister take her seat. Stop the clock for a second, please. Is the minister done? OK, start the clock. New question.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm sorry. Stop the clock. I thought you said you were done. I apologize.

Interjection.

The Speaker: OK, I'm sorry. If the member would take her seat, the minister has a little bit of time. I think we docked some time; if we could put 10 seconds back on the clock. We'll hold it for 10 seconds.

Minister, sorry to interrupt.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: The laughter from the other side of the House is not what students need to hear.

Those were two governments that increased tuition 10% every single year during their tenure, and because of the increase in tuition every single year we took a look—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up at this point. Thank you.

HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

With your permission, Mr Speaker, I'd also like to introduce Nick Shkordoff, my co-op student from St Stephen's Secondary School in Bowmanville.

Recently in my riding of Durham a number of my constituents had the privilege of listening to Minister Frank Klees speaking about his impressions of the historic turnaround in this province witnessed since we formed the government in 1995. Minister Klees identified a number of problems to which we found solutions. While our proven track record was certainly a hit with the audience that evening, the most overwhelming response came when he used the simple comment: "We did what we said. We kept our promises."

1450

Minister, our record of keeping promises has not only contributed to the revitalization of Ontario but I think it has also helped the public's perception of politicians themselves.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock, please. The member take his seat, please. Member for Durham, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member, come to order. It is not funny. We are now waiting for the NDP, who will miss their question if the time runs down, and it's not funny. When I stand up and say the time is over, it is over. The member had a little over a minute and it is now the minister's time. I would appreciate it, when I stand up—it's not funny to stand up and continue on. The NDP will lose their question. It's very important. They are sitting waiting quietly and we can't have the clock run on.

Minister of Health for the answer.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): When it comes to the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, I am very pleased to say that our initial investment into the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program was \$10 million. Based on—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister of Health, take her seat. Order. Stop the clock, please. I'm going to watch the clock. I thank all members on both sides for their support. I said we would have 10 seconds. Before, we said we were going to wait 10 seconds before it starts. If the member had heard that, had waited 10 seconds and then it starts, that's why the question was coming. Quite frankly, it's to give the opposition members more time, so I don't know what he is complaining about.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My understanding is the clocks are

in here so we can all see the time. The clock was not running while the question was being answered and—

The Speaker: Member, take his seat. I explained to the members what happened. It is easier to wait 10 seconds when I put the time on the clock. The reason I am putting time on the clock is we are not going to miss a supplementary for 10 seconds because of foolishness going on on both sides with the official opposition and the government members.

The members of the third party don't get much of a chance under the new standing orders, and I'm determined to get down to that question. When games are played on both sides to run the clock down, quite frankly, it isn't going to go on.

I said there would be 10 seconds put back on the clock. It is easier to not start the clock than it is to add it, so we were doing it. That's the way it can be done, and in the future it will be done that way as well.

Minister of Health.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I am very pleased to say that our government has demonstrated its commitment to the welfare and well-being of all children in the province of Ontario. We announced our Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program with an investment of \$10 million; that was in 1997. I am very pleased to say that last week I made an announcement indicating that we were increasing the amount of funding to a total of \$67 million, which means that every child now born in Ontario will be screened to determine if they are at any risk and, if so, they will get support.

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Madam Minister, for that response. I know that to Durham this means in excess of \$925,000, which certainly will go a long way to helping our children get a good start in life.

Minister, these are real changes. Could you share some of the other reforms that you have made working with the federal Minister of Health for all citizens of Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Yes, we certainly have made some very significant reforms in the province of Ontario, not only to the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, but we're also moving forward with primary care reform. We have expanded home care; in fact, our funding is the highest per capita in all of Canada. We continue to expand our drug programs to make sure they are accessible for those who don't have the funds to support them.

Unfortunately, despite the tremendous reforms that have been implemented by not only the Ontario government but governments throughout Canada, whether in the provinces or the territories, there has been absolutely no reaction and no response from the federal government. Of course, as you know, they continue to refuse to restore the federal transfer cuts.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health's time is up.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask unani-

mous consent to allow the NDP to ask their principal and supplementary questions and extend the question period accordingly.

The Speaker: I've heard some noes, but we will attempt to get to it.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY EMPLOYEES

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): My question is to the Minister of Correctional Services. Earlier, in answer to a previous question, you said that when you were first appointed you spent a lot of time visiting different facilities within your new ministry and that you talked to workers. It's nice that you went touring, it's nice that you were talking to the correctional officers, but it's clear that you weren't listening to them. The issues they care about, quite frankly, are the issues that Ontarians care about in our correctional services. First of all, they care about their jobs and their ability to provide for their families, which is a right that they and every other worker in this province have. Secondly, they care about the professional conduct they bring to Ontario corrections, which, I would remind the member, is respected around the world.

Minister, stand in your place today and tell the correctional workers what they really came here today to hear: first of all, that you're not going to privatize away their jobs; secondly that their wages and benefits will remain at the same levels they are now; and thirdly, assure these correctional workers and assure Ontarians that you're not going to privatize our public professional correctional system.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): To the member opposite I will say what I've been saying a number a times, either inside this House or outside this House, that what I intend to do is have a correctional system here in this province that is producing results as far as correcting the behaviour of the people who go to those institutions is concerned, and at a cost the taxpayers can rightly afford—neither one of those, frankly, that under your leadership you were prepared to offer the people of this province.

I must say, though, that as I toured the institutions in this province one of the first comments that came to me was, "This is the first time any correctional minister has stepped foot in these institutions to speak to the front-line officers." I should say to you, sir, that it was rather interesting to hear coming from you the comment that this is particularly not a good practice on behalf of this minister. I find that a little discouraging.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is it parliamentary to say that you have reduced tuition fees for university and college students when in fact the minister herself has admitted that she's increased them by—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): That's not a point of order to get that across.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a

point of privilege, Mr Speaker: Today I found, interestingly, from Bill C-473 from the House of Commons of Canada that the federal Parliament has unilaterally changed the names of four ridings in the province of Ontario without any formal consultation or any consultation with either the members of this Legislative Assembly—

The Speaker: The government House leader knows that there needs to be notice of a point of privilege. Is it a point of order he's doing here or a point of privilege?

Hon Mr Sterling: A point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: OK, if the member could get to the point of order very quickly.

Hon Mr Sterling: There are four ridings which, I have found out today, and some of the other members—I was talking to the member for Broadview-Greenwood. For four ridings, the names have been changed at the federal level, without consultation. You may know, Mr Speaker, that our bill, which we passed when we changed to go from 130 ridings to 103 ridings, requires that the provincial names of the ridings be the same as they are at the federal level. We thought, as a government and as members of this Legislature, that there would have been some consultation between the federal Parliament and the provincial Parliament.

The Speaker: I'm sorry, I don't hear a point of order. If the member could get to it quickly. I've given him a little bit of leeway. If there is a point of order relating to our House, if he could get very quickly to a point of order.

Hon Mr Sterling: It's interesting that one of these ridings happens to be held by an NDP member and three by Progressive Conservative members.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Hon Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, it is a point of order, if I could just—

The Speaker: Very quickly, because I haven't heard anything that would lead me to believe there's anything totally related to points of order in this House. For the last time, and very quickly, if he could get to at least the point of order in the standing orders that he's talking about, I would appreciate it very much.

Hon Mr Sterling: Well, I was going to ask you, Mr Speaker, if you would consult with the Speaker of the House of Commons to try to gain some kind of co-operation between the two legislative bodies—

The Speaker: This is not a point of order. Will the government House leader take his seat.

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Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe I do have a legitimate point of order here, on the same subject. I'm affected by this change. I found out through the Internet that Dennis Mills, the MP for my riding—let me get to my point here—unilaterally changed the name without even consulting with me. I'm asking for your guidance because I was not consulted, nor were my constituents consulted, in any way on this. It means a cost to me. I'm going to have to change my signs which I just had changed when my riding was changed from Riverdale to

Broadview-Greenwood, and all my letterhead. I'm wondering if—

The Speaker: It's not a point of order. I appreciate the member's point, but it does not relate to any point of order which is the proceedings in this House. You may have a valid point, but it does not relate to any of the standing orders in here. There'll be plenty of opportunity for all members to discuss it. It doesn't affect the proceedings in here, so it's not a point of order.

Mr Gerretsen: Mr Speaker, on the same point of order: Even though the House leader admits that made a mistake in the bill that was passed in the last session—

The Speaker: We're not going to continue on with this silliness that goes on. When I make a ruling, I make a ruling. We're not going to continue on with this silliness and that's all it is.

Member for Sudbury on a point of order?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): It's a petition.

The Speaker: We do have another point of order.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Mr Speaker, on a point of personal privilege: I'd just like to clarify in response to a question—

The Speaker: It's a point of personal privilege to correct the record?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Yes. I wouldn't want anyone in this House or watching on television to be under the impression that—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Let him finish. Is it to correct your own record? It's to correct your record, OK.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Mr Speaker, in response to a memo from a staff member at the Ontario Realty Corp signed by Bob Budd, I've been able to check out, and he has verified this, that this was in response to an MPP—

The Speaker: That's not a point of privilege. Petitions? I recognize two different members. It's difficult; we'll go by seniority.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a fresh petition you'll be interested in:

"Whereas cancer patients in Ontario requiring radiation treatment face unacceptable delays and are often forced to travel to the United States to receive medical attention;

"Whereas many prescription drugs which would help patients with a variety of medical conditions such as multiple sclerosis, arthritis, diabetes and heart failure are not covered by OHIP;

"Whereas many assistive devices that could aid patients in Ontario are not eligible for funding from the Ontario Ministry of Health;

"Whereas community care access centres have inadequate funding to carry out their responsibilities for long-term and home care;

"Be it resolved that Premier Mike Harris be requested to sell the two new turboprop luxury aircraft just purchased by this government and quietly announced just before the Easter weekend and use the money derived from the sale to meet the aforementioned health care needs."

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to pass to leave prison without an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets;

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I affix my signature to this petition.

STUDDED TIRES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario with regard to the law banning the use of studded tires in Ontario.

"Whereas personal safety on winter roadways would be greatly increased;

"Whereas improved technology on studded tires proven in other countries and provinces will not damage the roadways;

"Whereas studded tires are used in many northern countries and all other provinces in Canada; and

"Whereas studded tires can save lives;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To rescind the law banning studded tires in Ontario."

I affix my signature to this petition and thank Allan Clouthier and Pat Cormier from Sault Ste Marie for garnering these names.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Lord's prayer, also called Our Father, has been used to open the proceedings of municipal chambers and the Ontario Legislative Assembly since the beginning of Upper Canada in the 18th century; and

"Whereas such use of the Lord's Prayer is part of Ontario's long-standing heritage and tradition that continues to play a significant role in the contemporary Ontario life;

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is a most meaningful expression of the religious convictions of many Ontario citizens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario maintain the use of the Lord's Prayer in its proceedings, in accordance with its long-standing established custom and do all in its power to maintain use of this in municipal chambers in Ontario."

I will gladly sign this petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel;

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program

with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

This is signed by yet another almost 100 concerned residents of my riding, and I affix my signature once again in full support of their concerns.

LORD'S PRAYER

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer, also called Our Father, has been used to open the proceedings of municipal chambers and the Ontario Legislative Assembly since the beginning of Upper Canada in the 18th century;

"Whereas such use of the Lord's Prayer is part of Ontario's long-standing heritage and a tradition that continues to play a significant role in contemporary Ontario life;

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is a most meaningful expression of the religious convictions of many Ontario citizens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario maintain the use of the Lord's Prayer in its proceedings, in accordance with its long-standing established custom and do all in its power to maintain use of this prayer in municipal chambers in Ontario."

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I have a petition with over 10,000 signatures from students across the province.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Ten thousand?

Mrs Bountrogianni: That's right. I don't do too many, but I get lots of signatures. To the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas students of Ontario are currently faced with the second highest tuition fees in Canada; and

"Whereas approximately 50% of post-secondary students rely on Ontario student assistance program loans to supplement the cost of living and education; and

"Whereas the changes made to OSAP, effective September 1997, have reduced accessibility to post-secondary education in Ontario; and

"Whereas students attending Ontario's post-secondary institutions understand their role in helping to achieve an efficient and balanced economy within our province; and

"Whereas Ontario ranks ninth among provinces in Canada for funding to post-secondary institutions per capita; and

"Whereas tuition fees have increased 60% over the past four years and 140% over the last decade in conjunction with an increase in the cost of living; and

"Whereas students have shown frustration and discontent with the recent direction taken by the government of Ontario in regards to post-secondary education;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase funding to post-secondary education," which will bring per capita funding up to the national level; "restore the allowable earnings in an academic year to the previous value of \$1,700 (that is, changed from the current \$600 limit before effecting the OSAP eligibility); and restore the eligibility of part-time students for OSAP provided that they are enrolled in a minimum of 20% of a full course load (as opposed to the current minimum of 60% of a full course load)."

I attach my signature to these petitions.

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LORD'S PRAYER

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer, also called Our Father, has been used to open the proceedings of municipal chambers and the Ontario Legislative Assembly since the beginning of Upper Canada in the 18th century;

"Whereas such use of the Lord's Prayer is part of Ontario's long-standing heritage and tradition that continues to play a significant role in contemporary Ontario life;

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is a most meaningful expression of the religious conviction of many Ontario citizens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario maintain the use of the Lord's Prayer in its proceedings, in accordance with its long-standing established custom, and do all in its power to maintain use of this prayer in municipal chambers in Ontario."

I affix my signature to this petition.

HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): J'ai ici une pétition d'un groupe de commettants et commettantes d'Ottawa-Vanier.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario, as part of proposed social reform, is downloading provincial housing co-operatives to the municipalities, the members of the Conservation Housing Co-operative Inc have serious concerns with this action.

"At no point were the needs and well-being of provincial housing co-ops considered. Housing co-ops were not represented on the social housing committee. Although housing co-ops are considered social housing, we are first and foremost a corporation. We believe that

our autonomy will be seriously eroded as a result of this action.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reconsider this action. We believe that we are entitled to the same consideration given to the federal housing co-operatives by the federal government."

Je suis fière d'apposer ma signature à cette pétition.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I also continue to receive petitions concerning the Lord's Prayer in the Ontario Legislature. I appreciate the member for York North reading in petitions.

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer, also called Our Father, has been used to open the proceedings of municipal chambers and the Ontario Legislative Assembly since the beginning of Upper Canada in the 18th century;

"Whereas such use of the Lord's Prayer is part of Ontario's long-standing heritage and tradition that continues to play a significant role in contemporary Ontario life;

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is a most meaningful expression of the religious convictions of many Ontario citizens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario maintain the use of the Lord's Prayer in its proceedings, in accordance with its long-standing established custom, and do all in its power to maintain use of this prayer in municipal chambers in Ontario."

I agree with the sentiment expressed and hereby affix my signature to these petitions.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I have a petition which states:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licensing fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane

highway with fully paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in this province."

It's signed by a number of residents from Ridgetown, Wallaceburg, Blenheim and Chatham, and I affix my name to it.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for London-Middlesex—sorry, Elgin-Middlesex-London.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I don't think my riding is going to change, Speaker, but you never know.

I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas Mike Harris promised an ODA during the 1995 election and renewed that commitment in 1997 but has yet to make good on that promise; and

"Whereas the Harris government has not committed to holding open consultations with the various stakeholders and individuals on the ODA; and

"Whereas ... the minister responsible for persons with disabilities will not commit to the 11 principles outlined by the ODA committee; and ...

"Whereas a vast majority of Ontario citizens believe there should be an ODA to remove the barriers facing the 1.5 million persons with disabilities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To pass a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act that would remove the barriers facing the 1.5 million persons with disabilities in the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature hereto.

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have petitions from a number of high school students from Harley, Oakland, Scotland and the Burford area.

"Whereas quality education is one of the fundamental necessities of a healthy society; and

"Whereas the quality of education has decreased as millions of dollars in funding have been cut;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the spending of millions of dollars on the My Ontario booklet was a gross misuse of funds, taking into consideration that almost every classroom in Ontario is in dire need of supplies and updated resources."

OPPOSITION DAY

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

FINANCEMENT DE L'ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should stop cutting and start investing in Ontario's colleges and universities now to ensure our students are prepared to meet the social and economic challenges of the future by:

Freezing tuition fees and re-regulating tuition on post-secondary programs it previously deregulated;

Increasing financial support to our post-secondary institutions to match the Canadian average level of funding;

Committing to extra funding specifically to assist universities and colleges prepare for the anticipated "double cohort" of students who will be seeking entry to these institutions in 2003-04; and

Resolving that any funding increases for science, information technology and commerce programs are not at the expense of liberal arts and humanities, as our students need a broad base of knowledge and skills to bring innovation to the province of Ontario.

This is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

It's my privilege to talk to you today about post-secondary education in Ontario. The fact that there is a link between the attainment of a college diploma or a university degree and the province's socio-economic vitality seems to be forgotten. The more educated the public, the more dynamic and productive the nation. It has been proven in fact that for every public dollar spent on post-secondary university education, \$4 is generated in the local economy.

This is heartening for us in my local region because we have two dynamic post-secondary institutions: Mohawk College and McMaster University. These schools work well together, as well as with the community, including the business community. There are far too many examples to cite, but one recent partnership is the applied health sciences institute, which will be housed on the McMaster campus to help meet the growing need in the health sector for occupational and physical therapists, radiation technologists, nurses and other skilled professionals. Once again we have proof that Hamilton is a vibrant and creative community and one of the province's best-kept secrets.

I will speak about the strides we have made in post-secondary education in Canada and the challenges we face and offer some ideas for solutions to these challenges.

Fifty per cent of all full-time workers in Ontario had post-secondary education in 1991, as opposed to 10% in 1971. Computer literacy is now essential in most work

environments. Fortunately, Canada leads the world this year in connecting its schools, post-secondary institutions and libraries to the Internet. As well, Industry Canada will spend more than \$20 million over the next three years to promote domestic learning software.

Nortel's now landmark paper on the need for more technically educated graduates for Ontario's fastest-growing industry sector, communications and information technology, sparked a number of provincial and federal initiatives to attempt to meet this need. The Canadian Foundation for Innovation operates as an independent, not-for-profit corporation and has committed funds over a five-year period for the development of research infrastructure in Canada. The federal minister, John Manley, is also about to announce the awarding of 21st-century chairs. McMaster University recently announced the use of CFI funds for a manufacturing research institute. The list of industrial contributors includes General Motors, Orlick Industries, Dofasco, Siemens-Westinghouse and Magna International.

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We do, however, need to ensure that we never compromise the integrity of our research or the public safety of our citizens for the sake of private donations. Jim Turk, the executive director of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, cautions us that universities should not give away their autonomy, for their value in a democratic society will become very suspect.

Nortel's document and other industrial reports which specifically highlighted the shortage of skilled information technology workers led to the provincial ATOP, or access to opportunities, scholarships. Offering scholarships, however, without the necessary infrastructure funds puts a university or college into a Catch-22 position. Nobody wants to say no to funds, but the challenge is then to absorb the significant infrastructure expenses from an already stretched budget.

Notwithstanding the importance of science and technology, our liberal arts graduates are successful in attaining employment—a success rate of over 98%, in fact. The expectations of employers are obviously met. These are academic skills—thinking, learning, communicating; personal management skills—responsibility, adaptability; and team skills—group and leadership. We therefore need to challenge the propaganda that these programs are not worth funding. And contrary to the Premier's divisive comments recently, there aren't any academics who oppose the production of scientists and engineers. Real, true thinkers can and do come from different academic backgrounds.

A student of mine from Wilfrid Laurier received a psychology degree in 1987; he is now president of Netscape Canada. A February article in the National Post also adds evidence, citing a student from the University of Toronto who won a plum job with Sun Life in New York. Hundreds had applied, and the five finalists all had MBAs. He was successful and got the job because of his skill at analyzing model investment portfolios. He ascribed his achievement to his years of studying ancient Greek texts.

The challenges, however, facing our students and institutions are numerous and the time for action is now. In the last 10 years, tuition fees went up by 102%; 58% since 1995 for colleges and 52% for universities. In fact, Ontario's tuition fees are the second-highest in Canada and this fall had the largest increase in Canada, 9.6%. Deregulated programs such as law and medicine have risen exponentially in tuition costs. Therefore, average student debt has increased. OSAP expenditures are up 280% since 1995 as students are forced to carry a larger percentage of the operating costs of universities, and this is at a time of an economic boom in North America.

Our US neighbours are using this economic boom differently with respect to post-secondary education. They have increased support to universities and colleges, in some cases by 52%. Our sad record in Ontario is to decrease support, anywhere from 8% to 20%. We are second from last in Canada in provincial spending for post-secondary education. We are 59th out of 60 provinces and states with respect to provincial spending in post-secondary education. A leaked ministry document in November recommended further cuts.

Despite these obstacles, the demographics and the relationship between a post-secondary education and a better future have not eluded students and their families. Enrolment was up by 6% this fall. The double cohort will lead to a record number of applicants. In fact, 90,000 students will need spaces in the next 10 years. A recent Price Waterhouse study stated that with current funding levels only 12,400 students can be accommodated. And these 90,000 students are in addition to what we ordinarily expect every year.

Another challenge is the fact that a significant number of our professors are within a decade of retirement. A significant number of US professors are within five years of retirement, meaning the US universities will be recruiting the best in Canada. This has already begun, if not at a significant quantitative level yet, very definitely it is happening qualitatively. Our best young minds are lured to the States and to other provinces.

In recent years, McMaster's ability has been challenged—

Interjection.

Mrs Bountrogianni: You weren't listening. I said "qualitative." It is happening.

Interjection: No.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs Bountrogianni: In recent years, McMaster's ability has also been challenged by an aging physical plant, like other universities across the province, and by the call to its professors from better-funded jurisdictions, as well as government cutbacks. Despite these obstacles, McMaster is committed to the value of accessibility. Last year, it provided access to almost 9% more students than required through the enrolment corridor. This is at a cost of \$5 million a year at one university alone. It costs \$5 million, and they have to absorb this cost because they are funding more students than the province is funding.

Yet, when this government made funds available for equity adjustment in 1998, McMaster received nothing.

We need to applaud our university for its commitment and, at the same time, support it in its request for more funds. McMaster, the private sector, the students and their families are doing their part fiscally, and surprisingly little complaining is done. It is time for the government to appreciate these efforts and to invest appropriately.

The SuperBuild fund was welcome but did little to offset years of continued cuts with respect to deferred maintenance. As well, it was based on matching donations from the private sector, which is fine for universities that are able to access private matching donations but very unfair to those that can't.

The Ontario student loan plan needs an overhaul. According to some chartered accountants who deal with the fallout of default payments in student loans, there seems to be little real difference whether the government pays for education directly or lends the money and then pays for the loan losses. As we learned today, yet another private institution in my hometown of Hamilton was declined further OSAP administration, and appropriately so by the minister, because they weren't giving it back to the students when they left.

Clearly, students would borrow less if tuition was lower, particularly in the areas of law and medicine where fees of \$11,000 a year are not unusual. And this is only tuition, not room and board. As well, the economic fallout of this student debt is an unknown right now because it is unprecedented in Canadian history. Graduates are starting their careers with \$20,000, \$30,000 and \$60,000 mortgages on their futures. Student debt cannot be allowed to increase. How can the future economy of Ontario grow if our graduates are spending their earnings not on homes, cars or furniture, or on raising a family, but on repaying student loans to the banks?

The province needs to work with industry to identify future shortage areas and be proactive rather than reactive. For example, it is acknowledged that the current demographics—most of us—will mean an increased number of people who may require significant health care resources in the near future. McMaster and Mohawk, as I stated earlier, have foreseen this need and are working together. But I recommend to the ministry that perhaps a program similar to ATOP, but in the life sciences area, can be implemented for new trends in health care training, pharmaceuticals, medical procedures or alternative forms of care to hospital care. These should be planned well in advance. The business community understands this. Ninety-four percent of Ontario business leaders support increased funding for university research.

With respect to the overcrowding that will certainly take place as a result of the double cohort and other demographic variables, colleges and universities can take advantage of summer terms, perhaps with a financial incentive of lower tuition for these terms. Other solutions can be found in distance learning and using new technologies. These solutions do require funds, but these

funds need to be seen as an investment and not as an albatross on the taxpayer.

I recommend that the ratio of administration to teaching and research staff in each university should also be made public. Let's think about funding formulas that reflect true accountability, not the present KPIs, which are a farce. One president called it "intellectually vacant." For colleges and universities that received funding versus colleges and universities that didn't, the difference was basically less than the standard error of measurement. In other words, they were being funded by chance.

The Provincial Auditor's report correctly identified a problem in that universities do not have the tools to demonstrate whether the amount or type of resource available would affect the quality of the program. Usually there is simply a scaling up of current numbers to the next level and a consequent scaling up of resources. These tools need to be developed.

1530

Private universities are rumoured to be opening soon in Ontario. The Liberal Party cautions our citizens about privatization of universities. This will lead to a two-tier system and the further alienation and disenfranchisement of students without the means to gain a post-secondary education.

With respect to the argument that privatization and the parallel competition will increase accountability, universities by this definition are already privatizing when they compete for private donations and endowments, and with the deregulation of professional programs. At the same time, our public institutions have managed not to surrender any of the attributes of the universities' diversity, comprehensive programs, pure research and guarantees of academic freedom. A private university sector might not promote these attributes.

Again, last night on the news, another private college, Clarke, was closing three of its campuses in three Ontario cities. Students have paid anywhere from \$4,000 to \$9,000 in tuition and were told they can finish their education elsewhere. Last year, again in my region, a private college closed and, as I mentioned earlier, another private college in Hamilton has just had its OSAP privileges taken away.

Another fear is that governments will see or use the existence of private universities as an excuse to make further cutbacks in the funding of public universities. On a personal level, my children will probably be able to go to almost any post-secondary institution they want, because they have two parents with good financial backgrounds who can pay for their education. As a Liberal, however, my bias is for students of all economic backgrounds to have these opportunities, not only because of the moral issues surrounding equity, but because it makes good economic sense and because my children's futures will be happier and safer if their cohorts are also prosperous. These are the values that guide me. They're actually quite practical.

It is a fact that accessibility to higher education leads to higher prosperity for all in the community. Investing in

our youth means investing in our collective futures. This may be all Greek to the Premier, but it is a fact.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate today. I want to say at the outset that our critic for training, colleges and universities will be in later to make more remarks, so I won't take up a great deal of time here this afternoon, because of course he will have a great deal to say on each of the items that have been listed in the resolution.

For my part, I was particularly interested in the point raised with respect to tuition, because students at colleges and universities across this province know that under the Harris government, they have seen tuition increase by a whopping 60% since this government has been in office. Of course, for those programs where the government has deregulated tuition costs, students who are trying to get through those courses have seen a much greater increase, far out of the reach of most modest- and middle-income families to ever be able to afford.

Of course the flip side of the huge increase in tuition is a huge increase in student debt load. It is particularly the increase in student debt load and the lack of response by this Harris government that I want to address in the time I have today. I want to focus very specifically on the Harris government's response to the millennium scholarship fund, because I think this government's response, which was a blatant cash grab, really points out that they couldn't care less about the level of student debt in the province and that they certainly couldn't care less about the debt levels of some of the students in the gallery today and the many thousands of other students across this province who are facing personal debt loads of \$30,000, \$40,000 and \$50,000 trying to get a university or college degree. Let me deal with the scholarship fund and this government's response to it.

As most people would know, the federal government established the millennium scholarship fund. They established a foundation in 1998, which was given the task of disbursing over \$1 billion in funding to most needy students, and that was to be done over a period of 10 years, I believe. Through the course of that, the federal government, through the foundation, agreed that they would enter into negotiations with each provincial jurisdiction to determine how that cash flow would occur.

I think it was clear from the announcement of the federal government at the time, and certainly from the mandate that the foundation has, that the principle was that the federal funding would go to the most needy students. It is not a scholarship based on merit or academic standing; it is a scholarship that is based on trying to provide those neediest students, those with the greatest student debt load, with some financial relief. I think the other principle that was established at the time the foundation was announced was that the money would go directly to students to help them deal with their debt load. I don't think the federal government ever intended that the money would go to financial institutions. This was to go directly to those most needy of students to help them with their personal debt load.

So the corporation or the foundation began negotiations with each of the provinces about how that federal money would be transferred to each of those provincial jurisdictions, and in Ontario the Harris government decided that \$3,000 would be provided to each student who qualified. A student doesn't have to apply to the millennium fund as long as they have completed an OSAP application. This province takes it upon itself to send to the foundation those students who could qualify for this financial assistance.

What is interesting about what Ontario did—I believe British Columbia was the other jurisdiction that did this and I'm ashamed to say that an NDP government ever would have gone down this road. This government decided that the money would not go to the student but would go to the financial institution, and as a result of doing that allows itself now to have a windfall, and in fact uses federal money to compensate money that Ontario would have paid out to deal with student debt.

Well, how does this work? Ontario has what they call an Ontario student opportunity grant, which says that a student will not owe more than \$7,000 in any one academic year. If a student owes more than that, then the portion above that \$7,000 is forgivable; it is paid by the province of Ontario. That was in place when we were the government. Under our government the level was \$6,000 and after that the province picked up the debt, and this government changed that to \$7,000. So it made it more difficult for even those students to get some financial relief. The government decided that the money would go directly to the financial institution. As a result, the money that comes from the federal government offsets the Ontario student opportunity grant. It offsets the amount of money that this government would have paid as a forgivable loan for Ontario students.

The scenario that has been set up at the end of the day is that the Ontario government benefits directly because it pays that much less to reduce student debt. It uses the amount of money that it gets from the federal government to reduce the amount of money that it should be paying to reduce student debt under its own incentive, under its own student aid program.

I want to give you two very clear examples of how this works directly. The first comes from analysis that was done by the Canadian Federation of Students in their submission to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. Their presentation occurred on February 4 of this year. This is how they describe the millennium scholarship and its impact on students. Given that these are the people who are directly affected, I would assume that they know better than anyone else how it's affecting students. Here it is:

"Despite its many shortcomings, the millennium scholarship does offer an opportunity to reduce student indebtedness in Ontario. To date, however, the Ontario government is using the money from the scholarships not to buy down student debt, but to help finance already existing provincial student aid programs. As it stands, most of the debt being reduced by the millennium

scholarship payments in Ontario would already be forgiven under the province's Ontario student opportunity grants, formerly known as loan forgiveness, which forgive any portion of a student's debt over \$7,000 per two-term academic year. As such, the millennium scholarships are only serving to reduce the Ontario government's loan forgiveness payments and are not reducing the overall post-graduation debt of the majority of Ontario millennium scholarship recipients. Some students actually stand to lose money if they accept a millennium scholarship, since any amount over the first \$500 of a scholarship is taxable.

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"The Canadian Federation of Students condemns this blatant attempt by the government of Ontario to appropriate scholarship money earmarked for students. By its own admission, the provincial government stands to gain \$50 million from this exercise in diverting funds away from students and into its own coffers, although some estimates have put the figure closer to \$77 million. While there have been vague promises regarding the reinvestment of the millennium scholarship in ways that help needy students, no concrete proposals have been forthcoming."

I'm sure that some on the government side would say: "Well, that's what we would expect the Canadian Federation of Students to say. We wouldn't expect that they would have anything good to say about the millennium scholarship fund. In fact, they've got it all wrong. That's not how it works."

So I want to also read into the record an excellent letter that was sent to our leader, Howard Hampton, on February 3. It comes from Confederation College in Thunder Bay. The board of governors there took a long, hard look at the millennium scholarship fund and determined the potential impact that it would have on their students. I think they have a very good idea of how this impacts on their students because they would have used information from their financial aid office to determine what the level of student debt was, who had OSAP loans, in what amount etc. In their financial aid office, they would have that on file for all of their students. I believe the information that they provided to our leader, Howard Hampton, is correct and points out very clearly how this scholarship works, how it takes from the pockets of the neediest students and provides a windfall to the province of Ontario. Let me quote.

"Dear Mr Hampton:

"I am writing on behalf of the board of governors of Confederation College to express our concern with the way in which the province of Ontario has chosen to administer the Canadian millennium scholarship fund. We understand that Ontario and British Columbia are the only provinces where the benefit of this important federal program largely accrues to the province and not to the students for whom it was intended.

"To our knowledge, 312 students at Confederation College have been advised that they qualify for the scholarship this year.

"—173 students will obtain no personal benefit whatsoever as the province is using their scholarships to pay down the forgivable portion of their student loan.

"—These students actually never see their \$3,000 scholarship, however they will be taxed on it.

"—It may also affect daycare or rent subsidies and other income-contingent assistance," they receive.

"—The province is the only party to benefit since the forgivable portion of the student loan is now funded by the millennium scholarship, not the province.

"—139 students will receive only a small benefit as their overall student loan will be reduced by an average of \$800 (and pay tax on \$3,000).

"—56 students from reserves will have their loans reduced by an average of \$1,515.

"—12 students will have their student loan reduced by the full \$3,000 (and pay tax on the \$3,000 scholarship.)"

Twelve out of a potential 312 will receive the maximum \$3,000 that they were intended to receive through the federal program, which the province in effect has stolen to have a windfall for itself.

"As you can see"—I'll continue with the letter—"this approach suggests most students should refuse the scholarship as it increases their financial burden rather than reducing it. For most it has little benefit. For all, it has possible tax implications. In some cases, it may have a negative effect on the tax situation of supporting parents. We do not believe that this was the intent of the fund." Of course it wasn't. "Your assistance in redressing this situation would be appreciated."

So there you have it from a college board of governors, signed by John Walker, chairman of the board of governors of Confederation College, who took the time to review the proposal that had been arrived at by the provincial government and came to the conclusion that in fact most of their students would not benefit at all, and that they would all be paying tax on a scholarship that most would never receive into their hands.

The question then is, given that the Canadian Federation of Students has exposed the government and how the government is using this federal money to subsidize its own costs, how is it that the government decided to do this? We addressed that very issue when we had the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities before us on February 25, before the public accounts committee.

I referred to some of the questions in Hansard, because I was very curious how it was the Ontario government arrived at implementing this kind of scheme, which so clearly penalizes students and which so clearly benefits the coffers of the province of Ontario. We had before us the deputy minister, Dr Christie, and we had Mr Zisser, who directs OSAP and some other ministry staff, but it was clearly Dr Christie and Mr Zisser who responded to most of the questions.

I asked if there were other provincial jurisdictions where the governments decided to fund directly to students, versus the approach Ontario took, which was to fund the financial institution. He replied that he believed there were some others. I then asked how it was that the

province of Ontario arrived at such an agreement. How was it that the Ontario government decided not to give money directly and students, but decided rather to give it to financial institutions and cut its own costs?

He said, "It would not have been possible under the current legislation." The question I had asked was: "Is there any legal or legislative reason why a student in Ontario could not have received a millennium scholarship, the full amount directly, and not still have received the Ontario student opportunity grant? What legislative or legal barrier was there to say that they couldn't receive both?" He replied: "It would not have been possible under the current legislation."

Then I asked: "Can you provide this committee with a copy of the piece of legislation that would clearly have said that these students can't receive both. What legislation is that?" He replied: "Well, there's no legislation that has that wording. The regulation that specifies how the student opportunity grant is calculated indicates that there is an order in which we do things, which is that the student must complete their program," blah, blah, blah. I interrupted him and said: "Sorry, this is a regulation?" He said, "Yes."

Mr Speaker, you know and I know and this government knows that a regulation can be changed like that. We're not even talking about a piece of legislation that blocked the Ontario government from giving money directly to students and that blocked them from also receiving the opportunity grant. No, a regulation in fact—many of them go to cabinet every Wednesday and the ministers who are here today would know that—easily could have allowed this government to have those students, the neediest, those who have the greatest financial debt, receive the federal millennium scholarship and also have a portion of their loan forgiven through the student opportunity grant.

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That's all that was required, a regulation like the regulations that are passed every Wednesday morning in our cabinet. No discussion in this Legislature, nothing. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities should have brought forward that legislation and ensured that Ontario students did get the benefit of this federal money, instead of doing nothing and allowing the money to be used to subsidize the government of Ontario's own costs.

That was what Mr Zisser confirmed, because I said: "If Ontario had really wanted to put money in the hands of the neediest students, Ontario could have had a regulation change which would say that Ontario students would receive the full amount of the millennium scholarship, \$3,000, and could also receive the full amount of the Ontario student opportunity grant at the same time—we could have done that by regulation, correct?" And the minister replied, "The province has the ability to make regulations."

I compliment Mr Zisser, because he tried as best he could, not to get the minister into any hot water and not to admit that what was lacking here was in fact the

political will to make sure that Ontario's neediest students, those with the highest debt load, got the federal money they were entitled to receive. That's what this was all about. A regulation could have been drafted overnight, presented to cabinet at any one of those Wednesday morning cabinet meetings and allowed Ontario students to receive the \$3,000 and the grant, and to guarantee that the money they received would deal with their own personal debt, not to help subsidize the portion of forgivable debt that the province was already going to pay.

What is the benefit to Ontario as a result of setting up the scholarship fund in this way? We tried to get at that during the committee hearings as well, and we had some difficulty. I think it is important to remember that this is a program which, as I understand, runs over a 10-year period. So if the Ontario government maintains its current unfair practice of using the federal money to subsidize its own costs, the benefit to Ontario over the 10-year period could be very substantial.

We know that in a cabinet document dated November 1999, which was leaked, the potential savings for this academic year by the province subsidizing its own costs with this federal money are estimated to be about \$90 million. There was a later estimate that was mentioned publicly in some news articles on January 25 that the actual benefit to the Harris government is in the order of \$106 million. So I went back again to the Deputy Minister and to Mr Zisser and tried to pin them down on the potential savings to Ontario. Dr Christie, the Deputy Minister, said: "For the fiscal year 2000-01 the gross benefit may be between \$50 million and \$75 million. We're not sure how much it is yet, because they still have to see how many students pass and, of course, how many students will be entitled to receive the forgivable portion of their loans, but between \$50 million and \$75 million." Then I asked the Deputy Minister, "Did that \$50 million"—although it's the lower figure—"include interest payments that would have been paid out if Ontario was making payments under the Ontario student opportunity grant for those people, and the government now has that offset by the millennium fund? Does it also include potential interest payments?" Mr Zisser from the ministry replied that he didn't think it did. So the actual estimate of the windfall to the province of Ontario, estimated by the Deputy Minister to be between \$50 million and \$75 million, is probably even higher than that once you calculate the interest payments the province would have paid but now has an opportunity to forgo because the federal government is picking up those interest charges under this situation.

So we have a situation where, at least in this academic year, we have a potential by the ministry's own estimates of between \$50 million and \$75 million that the province stands to gain. If you consider that the province will probably keep in place this really blatant and ridiculous scheme in terms of not giving that money directly to students, where it should be going, the province stands to gain quite a bit of money over the next 10 years, doesn't

it, even if you do \$50 million over the next 10 years? If you add the interest payments, it's probably more than that.

The question then remains: What is the government doing with this windfall profit they have realized by subsidizing their own payments with federal government payments, payments that I remind you should have gone to students, the most needy in the province? Are those savings going back to help students with debt? I think the Canadian Federation of Students said it best in their presentation to the standing committee, when they said, "While there have been vague promises regarding the reinvestment of the scholarship money in ways that help needy students, no concrete proposals have been forthcoming." Again, during the committee hearings on February 25, I asked the Deputy Minister what plans there were to take those savings, in the order of \$50 million plus, and give some of that money back directly to students to help their debt, which was what the scholarship fund was intended for in the first place. The Deputy Minister could only tell us, and I don't think this is his fault, that this matter is still under discussion and he didn't know when the government would release any detailed proposals about how they are going to reinvest that money. I could be wrong, but I don't think the government or the minister has done that to date.

We have a situation where we have college and university students in this province who have seen their tuition increase by 60% under the Harris government. If they are in deregulated graduate programs, though, the increase has been even more substantial than that. As a result, thousands of students in this province now face an incredible debt load as they try to get their degree or diploma, with no idea whatsoever how they are going to deal with that once they graduate.

The federal government, to its credit—I could make comments about the federal lack of funding for colleges and universities, but I won't do that today because I know my colleague, who is the critic, is going to do that in his remarks—did put forward a program to deal with the neediest students, those with the greatest financial need and the greatest debt load. I think it was their intention, and a principle of the millennium scholarship fund, that that money go directly to students to deal with their personal debt load. It is shameful that this government and, I regret to say, an NDP government in British Columbia would decide instead not to send that money to the neediest students but to use that money to subsidize their own costs, to compensate their own costs for student aid, to reduce their own costs for student aid instead of having those students reduce their personal debt load.

It's shameful that both governments decided to do that particularly because all that would have been required to allow Ontario students to have access to both the scholarship money and the student opportunity grant was a mere regulation that could have been passed at a cabinet meeting any Wednesday morning the cabinet sat. Indeed, if there was the political will by the minister and

this government, it could be done by next Wednesday morning to ensure that after this year, every student who is entitled to receive this money will get this \$3,000 directly. I hope that this government, if it cares anything about student debt load, particularly those students with enormous personal financial debt, will make a decision that they really shouldn't be using money intended for students to compensate their own costs but should, instead, be ensuring that that federal money, the \$3,000, flows directly to those students. I hope this government will do the right thing, the decent thing, and put forward a regulation change which will ensure that that money will flow to students who need it, students who deserve it and students who should have had it given the principle of the fund in the first place.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): It is my pleasure this afternoon to rise in this House and speak to the Liberal motion with regard to colleges and universities.

I'd like first to state some critical issues concerning post-secondary education as put forward by the Liberal critic. I welcome the chance to emphasize that this government has a vision for our colleges and universities and that is there will be, as there has been over the history of governments of all political stripes in the province, a place for every qualified and motivated student.

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I think all of the legislators here today have a sincere interest in ensuring our young people are prepared to lead full and productive lives. It's vitally important to us as parents, and of course as citizens of this great province of Ontario.

We should be very proud in this province of the investment we have made in our post-secondary institutions and training programs. They're second to none. We have benefited from the highly educated and trained citizens who have passed through our halls of learning and of training. Their contributions and their great success stories have been a key factor in our shared and growing prosperity in recent years.

Ontario already has one of the highest post-secondary participation rates in the world. For 18- to 24-year-olds, 35% are enrolled in our post-secondary system. But we must continue to work even harder to lead Canada and other countries around the world in economic growth, job creation and prosperity. We need a system that provides high-quality learning, that is relevant to the real needs of the workplace, and that will have a plan for all willing and qualified learners.

Our vision is to work in partnership with all sectors to create a made-in-Ontario education and training system, one that will support sustained prosperity for individuals, our province and our country.

In today's world a top-quality education is not a luxury, it's an absolute necessity. This year we are spending \$4 billion on post-secondary education in Ontario, and that's a greater investment in post-secondary education than has been made by any other government in Ontario's history. I should add that in the 2000-01

academic year post-secondary operating grants will increase by more than \$68 million, to a total of nearly \$2.4 billion. This will help to provide even more spaces for students and to improve the quality of education.

I would like to address the motion before the House today and the recommendation that tuition fees be frozen or re-regulated. I find it very interesting that the Liberal Party has put forward this motion to freeze tuition fees when in their 1999 election platform they claimed they would indeed immediately cut tuition by 10%. That is what they would have done. But today they're satisfied to freeze it. Obviously, they're learning something. They're either not aware of their own party policy or they have finally got the message that our government has been advocating: that the current tuition fee policy is fair and reasonable.

You see, there is no convincing evidence to support the claim that higher tuition fees are limiting access to post-secondary education—no convincing evidence. As a matter of fact, our government is proud that more students than ever are accessing higher education. In 1998-99, 35% of the Ontario population aged 18 to 24 was enrolled full time in college or university, the highest participation rate in Ontario's history, and preliminary undergraduate enrolment data for next year shows an increase of about 3%.

Under the NDP, 25.5% were enrolled. Under the Liberal government, even fewer: 23.3% were enrolled. The NDP and Liberals both allowed tuition to increase under their governments, but obviously did very little to increase accessibility. Under the Liberals, university tuition increased by 35%; college tuition increased by 29%. Under the NDP, university tuition increased by 50%; college tuition increased by 36%. Imagine that in four years under the NDP university tuition increased 50%. And I listened to this diatribe from the member. I forget what the riding is—it's a new riding—but anyway I'll figure it out.

Our government, on the other hand, wants to make post-secondary education accessible. As a result, our government is providing the most financial assistance ever available to students in Ontario, of which everyone in this House should be very proud.

The facts are extremely confusing for some of my colleagues. What I resent about that is that some of my colleagues in opposition confuse our young people and absolutely wipe out their hopes and dreams. Our system is accessible. We want them to be there. We want their parents to be part of the planning. We know that it's necessary to provide support.

Some of the ways we have done this: We have increased OSAP support by 30% over 1995-96. We have introduced the Ontario student opportunity trust fund, which was a new, innovative and modern idea. Even tonight, I'm going to Victoria-Haliburton, where the Kawartha Manufacturers Association will provide \$5,000 to Sir Sandford Fleming College, and of course the government of Ontario will match that. It is those small donations of \$5,000, matched by the Ontario government

to the tune of \$5,000, that in fact have created a fund of over \$600 million to date. That is people helping our students. That's business, industry and unions helping our students. If we want to be competitive, we'd better help them in a different way than the former two governments refused to help them. Over 10 years, that means 185,000 new students will be helped through the student opportunity trust fund.

We announced last week, as part of our millennium reinvestment for the students who are here today, our Aiming for the Top tuition scholarship—

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Is that like the merit scholarship?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: It is not just merit; it is for people in need as well. It's for people in need and with merit. For programs that did not materialize, I will say to the heckler in the opposition—and I cannot speak for his heckling—that in fact beginning in September 2000 we will reward students with top marks and we will help top students with financial need. At maturity, more than 10,000 students will benefit.

For the heckler opposite, I have the new OSAP form. If you turn to page 12, it actually talks about our new Aiming for the Top tuition scholarship as well as the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation general award, which I will speak to in just a few moments. Our Ontario student opportunity grant program will give students who borrow more than \$7,000 a grant for the portion of their loan above this amount.

We believe that students who benefit from the education they receive should pay a reasonable portion of the cost of their education. Right now, students contribute, on average, 35% of the cost, with the taxpayer picking up the rest of the tab. We recently announced that institutions will be allowed to raise tuition for most programs by 2% a year for five years. That means the maximum allowable tuition fee increase for university arts and science programs next year is approximately \$77, which takes the tuition to \$3,951 as an average. For college programs, the maximum increase next year is approximately \$34, which takes the tuition in our college system to an average of \$1,718. This is the lowest rate of increase since the late 1970s. For the NDP member who was clapping, I do appreciate that. He doesn't think it's appropriate, but he must remember that his government raised tuition by 50% in just four years. We will maintain fees at a fair and reasonable level of approximately one third the cost of the education.

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By setting out a long-term tuition strategy, we're doing two things: We're assisting our students and our parents in planning and preparing for the cost of post-secondary education, which is an excellent investment in their future; we're also giving them good data about the institutions and the courses they want to take at those institutions, so that they can make a good choice as to what their success rate could be, and what their success rate could be in finding a job.

With both this motion and recent fearmongering via the media, the opposition would have you believe that

our government has no plan to accommodate the increased numbers who will be attending our post-secondary institutions in the future. I think as parents, as members of communities, as people who are totally committed to our young people, we know that we must have a plan—and we do have one. We had to start somewhere, and so the announcement of \$742 million in our SuperBuild funding set aside to help our institutions build and sometimes renovate buildings, classrooms and laboratories to prepare for the increased number of students who will be attending our colleges and universities in the future. When coupled with the investment by the private sector, I can say that we've invested \$1.4 billion to date this year.

This is the third-largest investment in the history of the province of Ontario, in the sense that after the First World War, when the soldiers came home, the government of the day decided to grow our university system; and in the late 1960s and early 1970s, John Robarts and Bill Davis built the college system. And now we're seeing exactly the same growth in our young people, in our student population, and that means that these are exciting times. This is the largest capital expansion in 30 years. Through 35 exciting projects across the province, we will create 57,000 net new spaces through this initiative alone.

The Minister of Finance has also indicated that he will work with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to ensure that this significant additional funding will be coupled with even more, and this money will be made available this year to institutions with the greatest need. So we're not finished in the capital part of our plan.

We committed, in Blueprint, that all willing and qualified Ontario students will continue to have access to quality post-secondary education, and we intend to live up to that promise and that commitment. We will announce the appropriate operating support at the appropriate time. As we mentioned earlier, in our recent operating grant announcement we committed an additional \$68 million to our colleges and universities. A portion of this funding—\$23.5 million—is aimed at helping institutions accommodate more students next year. We will also ensure that OSAP has sufficient funding so that no student affected by the increased enrolment will be denied access to post-secondary education for financial reasons.

I've already set out in my discussion this afternoon all of the other supports that are available to students, and we take this very seriously. I too have spoken with our students from our colleges and universities about their disappointment, and sometimes anger, with the way the Canadian millennium scholarship was set up, and I too have listened to them and taken their recommendations. To date so far we have been able to establish that it will no longer be called a scholarship; it will be called a bursary. To date so far we have been able to establish that there will be no tax on this money, and to date so far we have written a letter and we have every reason to

believe that we will in fact be listened to. We're asking Mr Riddell, who is the executive director of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, "to change your practice of notifying award recipients of their award well into their academic year and issuing the awards during the second term of study. We feel earlier notification and issuance of the awards would bring far greater certainty to students about their financial situation as they embark on their year of studies." So, earlier announcements.

We have asked: We would like to see payment made through cheques provided directly to students. We feel strongly about that. We feel we've made some changes, and perhaps these two requests will be agreed to and we can make some announcements in the near future. After 20 minutes of listening to the opposition member from the NDP, I will say that instead of just listening and standing up and complaining, it would have been very helpful if members of the opposition—some of them do—could work with us to make things better. For those who have sent letters to me and asked us to move forward together, we have had some success in working with the federal government.

I would like to move on here. Our government is working in consultation with Ontario's colleges and universities to plan for this increased demand. Our post-secondary education working group of ministry, university and college representatives is discussing capacity issues and helping us plan for the future. All of us working together will be the great success story of the time, working with students, parents, teachers, members of our communities, the business community, college and universities, trainers, to get it just right.

Our government has been the subject of criticism over our funding of high-tech science and engineering programs. The opposition claims this has been at the expense of the liberal arts and humanities. Let me assure this House and the people of Ontario that our government has not reduced financial support for liberal arts programs, period. The liberal arts are an essential component of our post-secondary education system, a fact we clearly recognized in our recent capital expansion announcement, SuperBuild. Over 680 new modern teaching classrooms are being created by 35 projects, many of which can be used for liberal arts programs.

One of the great strengths of Ontario's university system is that it provides a large number of spaces for students wanting to study the humanities and social sciences. Fifty-two per cent of Ontario students in first entry undergraduate programs are studying humanities and social sciences; those are 1998-99 numbers. Of all the humanities and social science undergraduates in Canada, 47% are here in Ontario, whereas we have only 38% of the undergraduate student population in Canada.

Student demand for arts programs has been decreasing—we know that—while the demand for science and engineering programs is on the rise. From 1988 to 1998, total applicant demand for science and engineering programs increased by 27.5%, while total applicant demand—these are our students—asking for arts

programs decreased by 28.5%. As the stats show, the spaces exist for students who wish to study liberal arts programs; however, there is a deficit of spaces when it comes to emerging high-technology fields that students are demanding access to in greater and greater numbers.

Through the access to opportunities program and other initiatives, we are ensuring that students wanting to study in technology-related areas have some of the same opportunities that are already available to those wishing to study in humanities and social sciences. The shortage of spaces in certain technological programs is unfair to students who want to study in these fields and cannot get access.

On the world stage, Canada has the highest percentage of arts and humanities graduates of any of the OECD countries, at 56% compared to the average of 38%. Ontario's percentage of arts and humanities graduates, 58%, is higher than the Canadian average, putting Ontario's percentage of arts graduates above all other OECD jurisdictions.

However, Canada has one of the lowest percentages of engineering and technology graduates of all the OECD countries, at 8% compared to an average of 14%—one of the lowest. We have to do better. Ontario's percentage of engineering and technology graduates, 7%, is below the Canadian average, putting Ontario's percentage of engineering and technology graduates below almost all OECD jurisdictions. This is unacceptable.

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Canada, and Ontario in particular, is doing an excellent job of educating students in the arts and humanities, but has fallen behind in providing the same opportunities for students interested in engineering and technological studies. That is why programs like the access to opportunities program, through which our government helps to create much-needed spaces in high-demand, high-tech science and engineering programs, are so important for the future prosperity of the province of Ontario and our young people.

This government clearly cares about our collective future. We want Ontarians to have access to high-quality education that leads to well-paying, rewarding jobs. We want business and industry to have access to a well-trained and well-educated workforce so they can continue to create opportunities for Ontarians across the province.

Our government is working hard in partnership with our educational institutions and the private sector to ensure that we marshal our resources as productively and efficiently as possible. We are working with our students. They have been our best advisers. We don't always move as quickly as they would like us to move, but we move in the right direction and we take their advice seriously.

We have a great deal at stake—no less, indeed, than our long-term economic competitiveness and our ability to generate sustaining and satisfying employment for years to come. We have a great quality of life in Ontario, one of the best in the world, and that is why we are doing our utmost to promote training and post-secondary education of the very highest calibre. Surely it is one of

the best ways to invest in our future and to invest in the quality of life for our children and their families.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): It's a pleasure to speak on post-secondary education on our opposition day. I have to thank our colleague from Hamilton Mountain, who gave an overview of the reality that exists in post-secondary education in this province today. But I'd like to focus on a great, small community college called Lambton College in Sarnia-Lambton, and I would like to give the minister a bit of a reality check as to what is going on with small community colleges.

Lambton College has a student body of 2,350 students and its student population is in the catchment area predominantly from Lambton county. This college is rated as one of the top colleges in the province by graduates and employers. Lambton College, just to give you an indication, is a college that is internationally recognized in chemicals production engineering technology, that is, processing engineering. This program is well renowned in the petrochemical industry and has almost 100% placement.

I want to also highlight another remarkable program in this college that is recognized internationally, and that is the fire science program. This fire school has trained the experts that led the teams in the Kuwait oil fields that were burning out of control. They were trained at Lambton College in Sarnia-Lambton. This fire school, in partnership with our oil refineries, provides world-class training for students. But this college was shut out, among other colleges like Fanshawe, Conestoga and Mohawk, from receiving any grants from the SuperBuild fund.

The mayor of our community wrote to the minister saying that Lambton College is an integral part of the Sarnia-Lambton Council for Economic Renewal's direction for economic development, yet this college is in huge financial trouble. That is the reality, and it's having to cut programs. It's cutting programs. Actually, a program has been suspended in the graphic design fundamentals program. There is also a culinary program, as part of tourism, that's on the cutting block. Why is it that small community colleges like Lambton College are shut out in such a way that it is detrimental to their survival?

This government is funding colleges in huge-growth areas such as the greater Toronto area, but they're being funded at the expense of smaller community colleges. It appears to me that this government is out of touch with communities outside the greater Toronto area. Lambton College provides opportunity and accessibility to post-secondary education. An area such as Sarnia-Lambton, that is not growing at the rate of the greater Toronto area, is losing; it's losing in the end. I must say that by its actions this government shows it does not understand the value of a well-educated society as a way to prepare for the future. The government, by its actions, doesn't seem to believe in the validity of small colleges as a way of preparing for the future. Is post-secondary education just a numbers game? Is that all it is? And does it shut out small community colleges? Because that is the reality that we have in Sarnia-Lambton.

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): I'm pleased to rise today to join the debate on the resolution on funding for post-secondary education. I want to compliment the minister for her comments and covering a lot of the areas within that portfolio and clarifying all of that for the assembly.

I think it's important, though, that I begin by restating the fact that post-secondary education enrolment is increasing. In actual fact, in 1998-99, 35% of the Ontario population aged 18 to 24 was enrolled full-time in college or university. This represents the highest participation rate in Ontario's history, and preliminary data show that it will continue to increase. Under the NDP in 1990-91, only 25.5% were enrolled. Under the Liberals in 1985-86, even fewer, 23.3%, were enrolled.

The member for Hamilton Mountain and I have two things in common. One is that we were both elected in 1999 and the fact that we both have a keen interest in education. I think the member opposite would benefit from looking back at some of the history. I know that neither one of us was here in the early 1990s or mid-1980s, but it serves us well to look at what our predecessors did, or failed to do, for that matter.

With all due respect, the resolution is redundant. From the beginning, the member states, "The government should stop cutting and start investing in Ontario's colleges and universities." I ask the member, where has she been? Has she not heard repeatedly that provincial support for post-secondary education grew to \$4 billion this year? This is the highest level it has ever been.

In order to maintain this commitment, provincial support for post-secondary education will increase by \$58 million in the year 2000-01. We made a commitment in our Blueprint to improve access to post-secondary education and increase recognition of excellence and achievement, and we are doing that. I want to quote from the Blueprint:

"Tomorrow's world will demand more advanced skills and knowledge than ever before. Access to advanced education will be vital for the next generation of Ontarians to enjoy prosperity and personal success.

"Our plan will improve access to post-secondary education, increase recognition of excellence and achievement, provide more direct links between learning and jobs, and encourage universities and colleges to co-operate on innovative programs geared to helping students find jobs."

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This is a government that keeps the promises made during the campaign. The people of Ontario know exactly what they voted for and what to expect. Investing in our students is a very important priority for this government. They are the future of this province and the future of this country.

Ontario universities are among the best in the country. I'm proud to state that Ontario ranks fourth in Canada in total operating income per university student. This takes into account all the programs we have put in place to assist students and allow better access to post-secondary

education. Ontario universities' total operating income is \$301 more per student than the Canadian average as of 1997-98 data. So I don't understand the meaning behind this resolution that states, and I quote, "Increasing financial support to our post-secondary institutions to match the Canadian average level of funding." As I've indicated, we are above the Canadian average in per student funding.

It is important to realize and take into account all the initiatives that have been introduced and implemented, to get a clear and full picture. Isolating specific areas and dissecting them from the total picture does not give the full account of what's in place. Even Lyn McLeod agrees that you need to take into account the student assistance programs in place when considering tuition fees.

Allow me to quote from Hansard on November 1, 1988. Lyn McLeod, then Minister of Colleges and Universities, at the social development committee said, "I think the tuition-fee level is only one part of the question, and the second part is the support to accessibility through the student assistant fund plan." She went on to say, "That is why it is so critical that we look at the whole question of student assistance at the same time as we look at tuition fees."

We are the first government to tie tuition fees to quality of programs. Colleges and universities are required to set aside 30% of the incremental revenue from higher tuition fees to improve access to students in need, as well as to improve the quality of education they offer.

The 2000-01 tuition fee guidelines require the board of governors of any university or college that chooses to increase tuition fees to approve and make available to its community a plan to increase the quality of education at that institution. Boards are accountable for deciding how to put the money to best use in their own institutions.

The student assistance programs that Minister Dianne Cunningham has announced have increased accessibility for many students entering colleges and universities. Starting in September 2000, Aiming for the Top scholarships will be available. These scholarships will be available for students who earn top marks and require financial assistance. A student will be able to receive up to \$3,500 a year for four years. By September 2003, we will be providing \$35 million in scholarships. This program will reward the excellence and hard work of our top students.

The Ontario student opportunity grant provides a grant to students who in any academic year have a student loan exceeding \$7,000. This grant reduces the student's outstanding debt with the financial institution by the amount over the \$7,000 figure. The grant is paid out annually rather than after the student graduates, hence the student will know the actual amount of their repayable debt.

The Ontario student opportunity trust fund is expected to provide needs-based financial assistance to approximately 185,000 post-secondary students over the next 10 years. The province will match the amount raised by the colleges and universities, creating permanent endowment funds, a total of \$600 million to assist students. This is

another initiative that assists students who for financial reasons would otherwise not be able to attend college or university.

While our government is providing the necessary financial support to ensure that there are enough spaces for students, it is calling on the colleges and universities to be accountable for the programs they provide to students.

A portion of the current year's operating grants will be allocated to reward performance. The three key performance indicators for universities will measure the employability of graduates and graduation rates. At the college level, the key performance indicators will measure the graduate's employment satisfaction and the employer's satisfaction with the new graduate.

With the introduction of performance-based funding, colleges and universities will be encouraged to deliver high-quality programs that will prepare students for future successes. With this objective, Ontario's universities and colleges will continue to be one of the finest systems in the world. The graduates who will be leaving these institutions will be extremely well prepared for future endeavors within various fields.

Ontario continues to operate the best universities in Canada. In the latest Maclean's survey, Ontario has three of the top five medical-doctoral universities and three of the top five comprehensive universities. This is a direct result of the excellent work our universities are doing, and our students are benefiting from the expertise we have in our post-secondary institutions.

Many of these institutions received funding for expansion through our SuperBuild announcement. The \$742-million allocation to capital and the creation of additional student places will allow post-secondary institutions to prepare for the expanded enrolment in 2003-04.

When I read the part in the resolution being debated here today, that states, "Committing to extra funding specifically to assist universities and colleges to prepare for the anticipated 'double cohort,'" I have to ask, when was the member opposite on February 25, 2000, when Minister Cunningham announced at Convocation Hall at McMaster University one of many announcements made throughout the province on the SuperBuild approved projects? McMaster benefited directly from this fund with a total of \$22 million earmarked for two projects that will create 2,800 new student spaces.

A total of 35 new capital projects have been announced throughout the college and university system, creating new spaces for 57,492 net new student spaces. Fourteen projects in the GTA area include George Brown College, Ryerson, Seneca College, the University of Toronto, and York University, local institutions that will now have more than 26,000 spaces available to students from my riding of Thornhill. This will allow many of them to stay at home while pursuing education in their chosen field.

In addition to simply making significant investments to create physical space for more students, the gov-

ernment is also working to ensure there are sufficient operating funds to hire professors, provide up-to-date teaching equipment and meet the other costs of delivering high-quality education.

On December 22, 1999, the member from Hamilton Mountain rose in this chamber and stated—I quote from Hansard—“Our obligation, according to the president of McMaster University, is not just to enroll every qualified student; we must provide them with a quality education. I agree wholeheartedly.” Our government’s policies clearly address both these issues.

To date, the Ontario government has taken many steps to strengthen the universities’ capacity to hire and retain faculty and to provide universities with incentives to attract top researchers. We have provided a fair funding initiative in the amount of \$29 million to be used to increase the number of teachers at the undergraduate level and to enhance professional development programs.

Several other research funding programs have been established, which will enhance Ontario’s ability to attract top researchers.

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One example is the Ontario Innovation Trust, which will invest \$250 million in research infrastructure at Ontario’s universities and research facilities. I had the pleasure to be involved recently in two presentations of funds from the OIT to two local institutions, Seneca@York and York University, where students from Thornhill will now have the opportunity to pursue studies in highly skilled and innovative fields using the latest leading-edge equipment and laboratory facilities.

We also realize that the future, with its many innovative technologies, is spurring numerous new career options for our students.

This government also realizes that the increase in enrolment will continue for at least a decade given the famous “baby boom echo” generation that will be starting to graduate from high school. I see in my own riding, with our six high schools—St Elizabeth Catholic High School, St Robert Catholic High School, Thornlea Secondary, Thornhill Secondary, Vaughan Secondary and Westmount Collegiate—that the increase in graduating high school students is not a small blip, nor a trend limited to a few years.

Our universities are autonomous institutions which, driven by their students’ demands, determine their own decisions for programs. Over the past 10 years, applicant demand for science and engineering programs has increased by 28%, while over the same period demand for the arts program has declined.

Christine Ruffolo, a York University liberal arts student from Thornhill, has said: “The government cannot make someone study the liberal arts. Students are picking more science and technology courses as that is where the majority of jobs are now. Funding has to be proportionally given to programs based on their respective enrolments.” She’s right. Currently, there is a shortage of spaces in certain technological programs, which is unfair to the students who want to study in these

fields and cannot get in. It is also unfair to employers who are seeking qualified graduates in these fields for positions which need to be filled soon in order for the companies to remain competitive in this global market.

It should be noted that though the demand for science and technology spaces in post-secondary studies is on the rise, the Ontario university system provides a large number of spaces for students wanting to study the humanities and social sciences; 52% of Ontario’s students in first-entry undergraduate programs in 1998-99 study the humanities and social sciences, and Ontario counts for 47% of all liberal arts undergraduates in Canada.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that this government is committed to post-secondary education. Each of our policies indicates this commitment as outlined in our Blueprint and our promises to the taxpayers. “We commit that every willing and qualified Ontario student will continue to be able to attend college or university,” and “learning for its own sake is an admirable goal, but we must also ensure that that our graduating post-secondary students have the skills and knowledge to get a job and improve their lives.”

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I come to this topic from a background of 25 years at community college and also 17 years as a school board trustee. What I’ve observed over the years has been that this government has done a direct attack on elementary and secondary schools. I’m thinking of attacks on special ed and attacks on music and attacks on rural bussing. But from the community college perspective, it’s been more death by neglect than an intentional attack.

I honestly now believe that the Premier hates education. I can understand that, because I suspect that every time someone in Ontario gets an education, the Premier loses a vote. Over the 25 years at the college, I have had a variety of governments, initially Conservative, then Liberal and NDP, and now the Reform Party governing the province, and we’ve seen profound changes take place in education over the last five years.

What I’ve seen from personal experience in the college system—and I’m thinking of the students I’ve taught in the last few years compared to 25 years ago—is that students are far better prepared than they were previously, much more highly skilled, highly motivated, wanting to get ahead. People in the college system, mind you, are students who were in the secondary and elementary system years before this government was elected.

I also see the students much more highly stressed than they were in the past. We’ve seen tuition increases at the community colleges of 147% over the last 10 years, while at the same time we’ve seen the average family income in Ontario decrease. We’re seeing students more and more doing part-time jobs. Now, part-time jobs may sound very beneficial because it gives them experience working, but they’re very detrimental from the viewpoint that when they should be doing assignments, when they should be in the library, when they should be doing all

kinds of things focusing on their education, they're being forced to do part-time jobs to simply pay the bills. I look at adults who are returning to the college system and the challenges they have financially, where we now have students in the community college system getting their food from food banks.

Over the last five years at the college I was at, Loyalist College in Belleville, the per-student grant from this government to the college went from approximately \$5,000 to \$3,000 per student. These are the operating grants. That has caused larger classes, and there is a maximum size for a class. If you can teach 25, it doesn't mean you can teach 150. The classes have gotten larger in size. The programs have gone to fewer hours. For all that you want to talk about the challenging world and the new curriculum, what students need to know, if you cut a program from 24 hours to 18 hours, there are topics that will simply not be covered in that program. We're seeing that happen over and over.

We're seeing the system survive by going to part-time teachers. Part-time teachers are very dedicated individuals coming in, but for a student in a college system, learning takes place other than just in the classroom. There are occasions when they need to talk to the teacher outside of the class. Part-time teachers, by their very definition, will come in, do their teaching and leave. They're not available for the extra help. The student suffers. Granted, it lowers the cost for the colleges, and given that cut in grant they have no choice but to do it—but it hurts. We're also seeing the high-cost programs being taken out of the college system.

The funding formula itself has been fundamentally wrong. If we talk just about operating grants, not capital, instead of old empty classrooms, we're going to end up with new empty classrooms. Five years ago, this government asked college presidents to bring forward a recommendation, and their recommendation was that this government move to at least the average of funding for operating grants. Don't muddy the waters with capital money. That didn't happen.

I believe if we truly are interested in welfare reform in this province, welfare reform will only be successful if we can take the people on welfare and educate them and prepare them for another job. You can't hit them at both ends; you can't cut the money on welfare and cut their educational opportunities. This government is doing that.

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Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have to tell you, there is so much to say and there's so little time—22 minutes for this bill. And we're lucky, because normally we only get a couple of minutes, and we skip a turn around here, as you know, because sadly they elected more of you guys than of us. I recognize that. But I tell you, it's so difficult for the good Ontarians of this province to know who's telling the truth. How do they know? I wouldn't know. About 99.9% of the population doesn't have a clue about what's going on. So we say to the minister, "You're spending \$1 billion less." She says: "Oh no, we're not. We're spending more than any other

government before." Who to believe? Except that the people who are participating in those institutions, like the few young people we've got here, know. They know. But it's not enough, because in order to get a government to change direction, you need the general public to fall behind it, and the general public doesn't know what is going on. That's why I feel like—

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): These kids have parents.

Mr Marchese: Monsieur Beaubien, s'il vous plaît. I feel like Sisyphus. I mentioned him yesterday. You know Sisyphus, Mr Speaker? Interesting mythical character.

Mr Caplan: On the wheel.

Mr Marchese: Not the wheel, no. This fellow was sentenced for an eternity to lift that rock up the mountain—for an eternity. I feel like that in this place, lifting that rock every day in this place. And then you have the minister of post-secondary education saying, "Work with us," right? Here I am carrying the rock, and she's saying, "Work with us." If only they would work with us, then things would be so much nicer in Ontario. How can I work with them if I am so busy carrying this rock up the mountain dealing with these people that I've got no moment of lucidity, which only comes when I get to the top, to deal with them?

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): You've never had a moment of lucidity.

Mr Marchese: She's so nice, M^{me} Mushinski. I like her too.

I've got to tell you, the only moment of grace for me is when you get to the top, like Camus said, when you get to the top of that mountain, and that is the moment of lucidity where life has meaning. Every now and then we have a few successes around here that give us energy once again to fight the good fight. The problem is, the rock rolls down the mountain again, and then the toil and the work to get the rock up again. I feel like that every day. It is an interesting mythical character to bring into this place, because a whole lot of people outside of here understand this kind of toil.

Mr Beaubien: Address the subject matter.

Mr Marchese: Monsieur Beaubien, s'il vous plaît. Mais j'ai beaucoup à dire. S'il vous plaît, laissez-moi. Monsieur le Président, s'il vous plaît.

"Canadians Facing Record Debt" is the title of this article. Every now and then I bring a few articles to this place. We have a debt load that we have never seen before. Mr Banker, you will agree with that, correct? That's a research study that was done.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): Anything you say.

Mr Marchese: OK, record debt. People are spending their money for the essential things, like housing—essential, we're talking about—like keeping yourself clothed and feeding yourself. At the end of the day—

Mr Beaubien: How much was that?

Mr Marchese: This suit? We'll talk about it later, Monsieur Beaubien, because I've got so many things to say.

At the end of the day, after you spend on all the essentials, there's very little left for anything. So when the minister of post-secondary education says smugly, "We have"—what is the term she uses?—"the highest participation rate ever," of course you do, because not only do young people recognize that a university or college education is critical, but everybody in society, including the troglodytes over there, understands that a post-secondary education is vital to getting a job, unlike the 1960s, where if you just used your back to toil away, as so many Europeans did when they were invited here to come and work for other Canadians and with other Canadians—unlike those times, we don't have a job market that allows people with a lesser education to get a job. Imagine, you need grade 12 to be a garbage man or woman, grade 12. If that doesn't tell you how difficult the job market has become, that without an education—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Madame Mushinski, s'il vous plaît.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): The member for Scarborough Centre will please refrain and allow the member for Trinity-Spadina to give his speech here this afternoon.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, I don't mind every now and then; it's just that when you have the flow, it's difficult.

Garbage men and garbage women: grade 12. You could do that—

Ms Mushinski: Sanitation engineer.

The Acting Speaker: I'll not warn you again.

Mr Marchese: You understand the dilemma that young people have. If you need grade 12 to be a garbage man or woman, imagine what you need to do something else. Young people recognize that you need an education. But to hear this minister say, "We have the highest participation rate ever," you would think it's because of her policies, and nobody would know any better or be any wiser—how would they know?—except the young people who know that without an education they can't do anything and they can't get the jobs. That's why they're going. But you know what's happening? They are incurring debts beyond belief. I say to you, at what cost? It's at a tremendous cost and it is a tremendous burden. Canadians are facing record debt. Students are facing record debt, but we hear this minister say, "We don't have a problem in this country; participation rates are high," failing to understand that debt for young people is an incredible burden. Madame Mushinski, you will agree, from—

The Acting Speaker: The member will refer to members, of course, as he knows, by their riding.

Mr Marchese: From Scarborough Centre.

The point is that the rate of participation has to do with real need. People necessarily need to get to university and college. That's it, not because of the kinds of programs they have in place, because the kinds of programs they have in place have created a disaster in this province. The Harris government has slashed funding for colleges and universities to the lowest per capita level of any province in Canada. During their first term

of office the Harris government cut \$400 million. To hear them, they didn't cut anything. But they cut \$400 million in the first term. It's close to \$1 billion that they have cut.

Unlike Nova Scotia, where that government said, "We are firing 800 teachers," this government rules by stealth. There are cuts by stealth. The reason why people were able to mobilize themselves in Nova Scotia was because the government was blunt and said, "We're firing 870 teachers." What does this government do? It can't afford to do that, so at the secondary level they simply require teachers to work more. They call that more student-teacher contact. What it is having fewer teachers teach more classes. As opposed to hiring more teachers to reduce the class size, they're using the present teacher force to teach more students. That's called getting rid of teachers. But they are saying: "We have more teachers now than ever before. We have more school funding than ever before." That argument applies to every issue that's debated in this place.

The sad thing is that regulated tuition jumped up by almost 60% since Harris took office. Average tuition cost \$2,470 for the 1995-96 school year and it now costs \$3,872 a year. It's even worse if you're in a graduate or professional program. But to hear the minister, tuition fees went up under the NDP government by 50%. OK. We had a recession. Tories of course are bemused by that, because if they were in power in 1990 they would have created a better business climate and we would have had jobs galore, I suppose.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): That's for sure.

Mr Marchese: Yeah, "That's for sure."

1700

The New Zealand experience tells us that all the policies you have entered into are not very healthy things to have done. After 15 years of privatization, of selling off public assets, of giving the tax cuts you people are doing, they're in a disaster in New Zealand—the same policies, but we'll have to wait a couple more years to see it. Wait until the next recession. In a good economy, these people have increased these rates to this extent. In a good economy, M. Beaubien, comment peut-on faire cela? That was in a good economy. Imagine, if we are facing—and we will face a recession in the next short little while, I would say a year or two. I hate to predict these things. But when we get into a recession under this government, what will happen if tuition fees are now at 4,000 bucks and there is no revenue coming in any longer? What's going to happen then? If tuition fees are \$4,000 now, they are going to jump to \$8,000, presumably, because you won't have the money.

They love to talk about fearmongering. Did you hear, Speaker? The poor minister, who was distressed, said, "in spite of the fearmongering by the media." I was wondering, which media are we talking about here? It must be the Toronto Sun, the one that supports the NDP. Oh yes, that one. But then I thought, "It can't be." The National Post, owned by my good buddy M. Conrad Black, a good guy. That must be the fearmongering

initiated by Conrad Black, no doubt. I'm certain. But that can't be, I then realized, because it's a Reform-minded paper. I thought, "OK, another national paper." It had to be the *Globe*. But it couldn't be—another good Conservative paper, surely they wouldn't be fearmongering. I know: the *Toronto Star*, the only other Liberal paper left—they're fearmongering. It has to be.

Do you see the point? It's laughable, right? It's so laughable, it's pitiful to hear these people speak on these issues. Fearmongering by the media: Who, their old friends? It is so, so tough in this place.

Do you know what? They say they have a vision of partnerships. You know what that is, right? As soon as you talk about partnership, it means government's getting out of the way, government's spending less on post-secondary education, on the college system and university system. It means less money for those institutions, those public institutions that are there for the common good. The students who study in those colleges and universities do us all a public good—not for themselves alone, but their participation is for us all. So when they say "partnerships," they mean, "We're going to put in less, and good God, we pray that the private sector is going to come in and give the money."

I've got to tell you, I'm not a friend of the interference, not only of this government, as we've witnessed in the negotiations that have been going on between the boards, Catholic and public at the secondary level—interference, gross interference—but we have at the post-secondary level what they call friendly partnership participation of the private sector. I don't think it's a great thing to be doing, but that's the only thing that universities and colleges have left. They've got to go to them for money, because the public sector, through the governments, is giving less.

But what do they extract from public institutions when they get involved? I'll tell you: a whole lot. That money doesn't come for free; it's binding. They help to shape public policy at that level. They help to determine the kind of direction that those private institutions want them to go into. We are commercializing the post-secondary level and commercializing the secondary level. People are fundraising to death at the elementary, at the secondary and post-secondary levels. They're fundraising to death. They shouldn't have to do that. They should be getting the adequate dollars they deserve to do the job they need to do, without having to run to the private sector for financial support.

I'm reminded about the contribution of the federal level of government. I've got to say, they haven't been too helpful or too good. You know, M. Sampson, I'm going to whine with you, all right? Speaker, you remember I have some beautiful quotes of Mr Gary Carr, the now Speaker. When Bob Rae used to wail against the federal government, at the time Tory, and then Liberal—we would wail against the unfairness of their contribution to Ontario, in a recession yet. And you had people like Mr Carr—you know him well, Speaker. This is what he used to say: "This statement by a Premier of the province

of Ontario is pathetic. This wasn't a statement, this was public whining. In Ontario, we have always been the leaders in Confederation. We've now become the whiners in Confederation." That was Mr Carr, your buddy. You weren't here, M. Sampson. But M. Carr, the now president of this assembly, said that. And it wasn't just him. I quoted Mike Harris the other day, and few other speakers.

You remember when you were whining about the federal government not giving you enough money for health? I'm just reminding you. You now, with a wealthy economy, the wealthiest in Canada, are whining, whimpering little children. You have so much money in your coffers that I have to ask myself, where is it going, that you're begging the federal government to give you the fair share that you wouldn't give us when we were in a recession? Whiners of Confederation. And by the way, while you're whining about health, you might want to also whine about post-secondary education support, because while they gave us a couple of billion for health, it was also a part of the package to support post-secondary education. And how much of that has gone to the post-secondary institutions we'll never know. We will never know. We don't know where the money is going. That's the sad thing.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Tax cuts.

Mr Marchese: I know it's going to tax cuts, but they will argue differently.

I wanted to get to something that I find interesting: the millennium scholarships. "If a student gets a scholarship but has a student loan, the scholarship money won't go to the student; it will go directly to the financial institution where the student has a loan. In many cases, the scholarship money will be used to pay off already forgivable loans." Can you imagine a provincial government that has so much money that they're snorking away, sucking up federal money that's supposed to go to students and they're sucking it away for themselves. Rather than giving the money directly to those students, they're snorking like the greedy, rich Ontarians they are, and they whine about the federal government not giving them enough money. Can you believe that, fellow Liberals? I can't.

Mr Agostino: You're one of us?

Mr Marchese: No, please, please, Dominic. I'm one of us over here. It's a little group here.

Harris—I've got to jump around, Speaker; there's so much to say. The minister made it appear like somehow she's not against the liberal arts programs. She admitted as much, right? But mon ami M. Harris had a different opinion. On several occasions he has made utterances that are scary, and he's the Premier of Ontario—scary stuff. "Mr Harris told an audience of high-tech employees at a Brantford high-tech plant Wednesday that universities were producing 'great thinkers, but they know nothing about math, science, engineering or the skills that are needed in the workforce.'" Poor great thinkers. How reduced they were to some puny sub-humans, I imagine. He goes on. "Mr Harris's comments

were only jokes for a friendly audience, but they represent a real aspect of his thinking." Don't they? Of course they do.

A Mr Jeffreys, who was interviewed by the Ottawa Citizen on this, says, "Many successful business leaders would say a liberal arts background is more valuable than a technical background." "English literature PhD candidate Sharon Hamilton presented a paper linking the arts degree to higher incomes and faster promotions in the workplace at an academic conference in Sherbrooke, Quebec."

The point is, we shouldn't even be debating this issue. There's a role for everyone, but to hear Harris, you wouldn't think so.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): He didn't say that.

Mr Marchese: Oh, he never said that. I wish I'd brought a few other articles, because he did say that. He pooh-poohed the liberal arts, he did. About two or three years ago he even started with his ruminations. God bless that he doesn't do too many of those. He should cogitate less in public and do it more in the washroom, I urge him. But I've got to tell you, the liberal arts, business leaders have said, is an essential component of individual growth and business growth and any kind of growth imaginable. So Mr Harris has so much to learn from so many other people, and God only knows that I worry about him.

There's so much to say. Here, look: "Demand for university education is growing dramatically, therefore"—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I beg your pardon?

1710

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): You've only got another minute.

Mr Marchese: I've got a minute. You're right. There's so much to say.

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations tells us that the demand is going to grow so much—an increase in the population of 18- to 23-year-olds. There will be 190,000 more young people in the province by the end of this decade. Ontario is experiencing rising participation rates. In 1985-86, only 13% of 18- to 23-year-olds were enrolled in universities. That number increased to almost 22% in 1997-98. And it goes on. There are a few other points.

The point is that this government is not investing for the future; not investing for the double cohort; not investing to have more professors to reduce the class size at the university level; not investing to put into those universities and colleges the things they need to be able to produce good students. They're not investing. I hope the population of Ontario will do what they've done in Nova Scotia. They're got to get into the streets and fight to preserve education at the elementary and secondary levels and particularly at the post-secondary education level, where we need it the most.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Stewart: I'd like to share my time, which is about eight and a half minutes, with the member for Scarborough Centre.

When I read the resolution put forth today suggesting that "the government should stop cutting and start investing in Ontario's colleges and universities now to ensure our students are prepared to meet the social and economic challenges of the future," I wonder where the opposition has been for the last number of years. We're trying to create unique partnerships, unique initiatives, investment, and we are investing in the future.

I want to talk about two institutions of learning in my riding, one being Trent University and the other one being Sir Sandford Fleming College. Certainly Trent is one of the very infamous small universities in this province and is in the process of looking towards a \$32-million addition, and indeed investment in the future of our particular area. Their goal is to create a teaching, learning, research and living environment facility to offer a distinctive, excellent and continually evolving teaching program and to sustain and enhance opportunities.

If you look at what Trent has done over the last over number of years, certainly the funding that has been achieved to pursue research has been pretty phenomenal. I want to congratulate Dr Jim Parker of the psychology department and Dr Holger Hintelmann of the chemistry and environmental research studies department from Trent, who were recognized by the Premier's Research Excellence Award this past year. Trent ranks third in research grants in Ontario, and Trent remains one of the nation's top undergraduate universities, ranking third. They are a very forward-thinking university.

The other institution of learning in our particular area is Sir Sandford Fleming College, which just got funded under the SuperBuild fund to the tune of \$27.4 million. If you don't think that is thinking about the future, I don't know what is. This money from the SuperBuild Growth Fund is going to translate into high technology facilities in Peterborough and Lindsay and a brand new campus in Haliburton. The Peterborough facility will have 127,000 square feet, and it will be able to accommodate 3,000 additional students over the next 10 years. The Lindsay campus will have expanded facilities for students as well as Haliburton.

So I just want to suggest that I believe this government—unlike other ones which constantly threw money at a problem and when the money was spent the problem was still there. If you look at the past track record of the two previous governments regarding increases in tuition, I suggest to you that has created much of the problem that we face and that students face today.

On the other hand, some of the increased debt and the constant debt that students are having these days amazes me. I look at my own children, who I did not fund for college or university because I couldn't afford it, but I can remember my son coming back from Toronto every weekend, leaving late Friday night so he could be in Peterborough to start work at McDonald's, for very poor wages, at 6 o'clock in the morning. He worked every

weekend. He didn't have a cellphone, he didn't have a new car and he didn't have a camcorder, but he put himself through university without debt. My daughter did the same. I also have a co-op student in my office now who works three jobs and will not have any debt.

Again, it's all called partnership. It's not only partnerships between the government, the private and public sectors, but also partnerships between the students and the teachers and government and the private sector. Working together, we can overcome the situation.

I'm going to turn the rest of my time over to the member, if I can.

Interjection: It goes in rotation.

Mr Stewart: It does go in rotation? Sorry.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): I am pleased to participate in the debate this afternoon on post-secondary education. It is, and will continue to be, a very important issue.

Ce débat me touche encore de plus près parce que dans mon comté j'ai l'Université d'Ottawa et j'ai aussi la Cité collégiale, le premier collège communautaire francophone de la province.

Ce gouvernement demeure toujours une menace à l'accessibilité et aux moyens disponibles afin de se procurer une éducation du niveau postsecondaire.

This Conservative government still remains a threat to the accessibility and affordability of post-secondary education. They have hiked tuition fees and increased the amount of debt each student can take on.

Le gouvernement se doit de demeurer dévoué au principe d'une éducation postsecondaire de qualité, non seulement de qualité mais aussi accessible à tous. L'accessibilité est le facteur le plus important dans ce domaine. À quoi servent ces institutions si elles ne sont pas accessibles? À quoi sert un programme de premier rang si les étudiants doivent accumuler une dette énorme afin de suivre ce programme? Un individu ne devrait pas compléter ses études avec une dette moyenne de 25 000 \$. C'est un lourd fardeau pour quelqu'un qui vient tout juste de joindre le monde du travail.

The solution is simple: freezing tuition fees.

On se doit d'arrêter l'endettement étudiant. Les statistiques démontrent un taux d'endettement des plus élevés chez les étudiants, encore plus flagrant pour certains francophones qui souvent viennent d'un milieu économiquement plus faible. Comment est-ce que ce gouvernement peut justifier une augmentation des frais de scolarité de plus de 60 % chez les universités et une augmentation de 53 % chez les collèges? On ne peut justifier cette augmentation. La qualité demeure toujours pareille et il n'est sûrement pas l'augmentation qui augmente la possibilité de se trouver un emploi une fois qu'un étudiant reçoit son diplôme. Donc, comment justifier?

Le gouvernement n'est certainement pas en mesure de justifier ses actions. Il fait preuve encore une fois de sa tactique d'imposer la responsabilité sur une tierce partie,

incapable de prendre une initiative qui est juste et qui serait en mesure de protéger nos étudiants.

N'oublions pas qu'un diplôme est un prérequis de nos jours dans le monde du travail, car sans diplôme, un individu n'a aucune chance de réussite. L'augmentation des frais de scolarité à laquelle nous sommes tous témoins n'est ni raisonnable ni abordable.

1720

A second solution would be to increase financial support for students. Le nombre d'étudiants qui reçoivent des argents du régime d'aide financière aux étudiantes et aux étudiants de l'Ontario, OSAP, a augmenté de 59 % entre 1991 et 1997. Malgré une augmentation d'étudiants, malgré une augmentation dans le nombre de prêts accordés par OSAP, la valeur totale de prêts a diminué de 46 \$ millions. Il est donc évident que plus d'étudiants sont éligibles, mais il y a moins d'argent.

Voyons que je n'ai qu'une minute qui me reste. I would say that Liberals remain committed to the principles of higher education with quality and accessibility. We believe that funding to universities and colleges is an investment, not a cost.

Ms Mushinski: Let me start off by apologizing for interjecting. I will try to control myself during my speech, Mr Speaker.

First of all, I want to recognize the honourable member for Hamilton Mountain for her dedication to this issue. I have worked in committee with the member and I know that she has the best interests of our young people at heart, and certainly when she created this resolution that was utmost in her mind. Unfortunately, however, I will be voting against her resolution, not because I disagree with its spirit, but because I think a lot of the initiatives that it proposes are either redundant or counterproductive.

The first portion of the resolution asks the Legislature to put a freeze on tuition and re-regulate post-secondary programs. Traditionally, a student's tuition fees account for approximately one third of the cost of his or her education, and certainly it was like that when the Liberals were in power. But in 1992, under the NDP government, it fell to less than 20%, which meant that the Ontario taxpayer was expected to pay \$4 for every \$1 that a student paid towards his or her education.

Obviously, this situation was completely unsustainable. The NDP knew this and that's why they increased university tuition by 50% during their first term in office. It was also, I believe, very unfair to ask the taxpayer to subsidize students at this level.

In 1995, when I first ran for a seat in this House, I campaigned on a detailed plan. The Common Sense Revolution was a plan to put Ontario back on track and I am particularly proud to say that it has been tremendously successful in restoring Ontario to its pre-Peterson glory.

In the Common Sense Revolution we promised to increase tuition rates to restore the traditional balance between subsidy and tuition. We restored balance in post-secondary funding by asking students to pay a very

reasonable 35% of the cost of their education. In 1995 this promise was spelled out quite clearly in writing, which we know is something that is quite foreign to Liberal policy manifestos over recent years. Again, in the Blueprint of 1999, we reiterated our commitment to this principle.

We recognize that an increase in the level of tuition each student is asked to pay will result in more demand for student assistance programs. We recognized this demand and we acted upon it. We decided to make more money available to students than ever before to assist them with their tuition fees. Under the Mike Harris government the amount of money available under the Ontario student assistance plan has been increased by 33%. We've provided tax credits to students that help them to pay the interest on their student loans. The Ontario student opportunities—

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): First of all, I would like to commend my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for her commitment and dedication to this issue, for bringing it to the floor of this House, because I believe some very important points were raised. I hope the members of the government are listening, because certainly many of the issues that have been raised here today do require some attention and action.

I'd also like to address a comment that was made in the House earlier today by the member for Carleton-Gloucester. He presented a question to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and indicated, "Much rumour and innuendo has been circulating on the other side of the House about the state of Ontario's colleges and universities." I was somewhat puzzled by that statement, and I suggest that much of the concern about the state of colleges and universities in this province has not only been from this side of the House—and certainly I think we have a responsibility to reflect what we hear within our constituencies and from some of the students who in fact are with us today. They have very real concerns that we do try to highlight and bring to the attention of the government.

This morning I attended a public agencies committee meeting. Present at that meeting was Dr Katherine Quinsey, a professor at the University of Windsor and also a member of the Ontario graduate scholarship program. If I might quote from Hansard, the doctor indicated that: "Obviously, the Ontario graduate scholarship program is about training investment in the brightest. Some will probably address this point, but I'll raise it now. We are in the midst, of course, of a faculty hiring crisis, and we want the best and the brightest out there." So here is a professor at the University of Windsor who very clearly indicated that there is a hiring crisis in universities right now. I'm going to address some of my remarks to that particular situation, which I believe the minister needs to pay some specific attention to and provide us with the plan, which we've heard nothing about so far in the debate today.

I'd like to tell you how we treat our brightest and best young professors. I know a young academic who finished first in his undergraduate class of over 500 engineers. He won a scholarship, went to Cambridge and came back to Ontario with a PhD to pursue his career. That was nearly 10 years ago. Since then, he has been snapped up by a leading university and has developed an impressive research program. Graduate students from across Canada, and indeed around the world, come to work with him. He has won awards for his teaching. He is 35 years old, has received tenure and is currently acting as a department head. This professor's salary was frozen for the first five years of his career, and now, 10 years into his career, his salary is equal to what he would get as a starting professor at an American university. Ladies and gentlemen, those institutions are knocking at the door. This is why we have a brain drain. This is why our young professionals in Ontario are leaving us in droves, and we are headed for a crisis. We will need 32,000 new professors by the year 2010 to deal with the double cohort. Twenty thousand will retire at that time, and we will need an additional 12,000 professors to manage the increase in numbers. How can we expect our young professionals to stay when we treat our best and our brightest like this?

There are so many issues, and I know that my time is limited. Another issue that I think is worth pointing out and directing the government to: We talk about the SuperBuild fund and the dollars that have been directed towards the bricks and mortar, and that is important. What about the operating dollars? The minister said earlier today that that information would be released at the appropriate time. I suggest that the appropriate time is now. If colleges and universities are to plan for the management of the double cohort, they need to know what resources they are going to have to manage the numbers they will receive.

Finally, I would also like to make reference to the fact that money for new student places does not impact the huge deferred maintenance bill facing Ontario universities. The tab for accumulated deferred maintenance represents approximately \$5,500 for each full-time student.

There are lots of issues that need to be addressed, and I thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for providing this opportunity for us to focus on that this afternoon.

1730

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): There are basically three issues I want to raise quite quickly. Before getting into those, I want to talk about the high quality of the educational institutions I have within my own riding: the world-renowned Queen's University, the Royal Military College and St Lawrence College, of which we are extremely proud in our area. Not only that, we know they do an awful lot for the local economy, which is extremely important as well. They employ an awful lot of people both in-house and out-house.

Let there be absolutely no doubt about it: The people of Ontario have heard an awful lot of figures here today, but all one has to do is look at the budget document that Ernie Eves gave to this House last year and compare it to the budget document that was given four or five years ago when they first came to power. Everyone in Ontario should know that \$400 million per year in annual operating grants has been cut out of the universities and colleges over the last four years, each and every year, and only \$23 million of that has been restored. We are the lowest per capita funding jurisdiction within North America now, save one or two.

The government members have talked today about only one thing: the fact that some new money is going into capital investments in this province. They somehow feel that as long as the new money goes into building new buildings, which are needed—certainly in Kingston we are very pleased that we're getting a new building at a cost of about \$40 million to \$50 million—that's going to solve all the problems and somehow deal with the lack of operating money that the universities and colleges have been suffering under over the last four to five years.

They've got to understand that just because you put new capital money in place, it doesn't replace the \$400 million you've taken out of the annual budgets of the universities and colleges for the last four to five years, particularly when you realize that only about \$62 million of the new money they're putting in is for the repair of existing college and university buildings in the province. An independent study has clearly shown that what we lack here in Ontario is close to \$1 billion that would be required to bring all the physical plant of colleges and universities up to date. So \$62 million out of the new funding is a mere start. I would like to see this government and future governments make that kind of commitment on an annual basis and not just be a one-term shot.

The second point is about students. That's really what it's all about. Students' fees have increased by 60% for university courses over the last four to five years, and over 50% for college courses. The average debt load right now is \$25,000 per student. Sole-support parents have been cut off the social assistance program so they can get OSAP, which they have to pay back. You and I know that what the Mike Harris government did was raise the level of forgiveness from \$6,000 to \$7,000, which in effect is saving the treasury of this province \$80 million. The government members never talk about that.

The final issue I quickly want to draw to your attention is the double cohort issue. Ninety thousand additional students will be coming into the system in the year 2003. What provisions have been made for them? Is there going to be faculty ready for them? I attended a meeting, together with my colleague from the adjacent riding of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, about two months ago where there were over 300 parents of grade 9 and 10 students at Holy Cross school in Kingston, parents who were deeply concerned over the fact that their students in grades 9 and 10 in effect will

have to compete with each other, because in the year 2003 there are going to be twice as many students looking for those college and university spots than otherwise would have been the case. Those students—and some of the pages here may be among them—are going to be deeply affected, and the kinds of decisions that they will have to make will affect them for the rest of their lives.

I say shame on this government for not dealing with that kind of a situation, which affects the livelihood of our future generations at a much earlier time. They haven't done anything about it, and it's high time that very serious problem gets addressed as soon as possible.

Mr Caplan: I'd like to focus my remarks on an area that hasn't been touched on today, which is the crisis in student housing. Not only are the costs escalating for things like tuition, but the cost of living for students is making it nearly impossible for some students to continue their education. The Harris government has made it worse by limiting the abilities of universities and colleges to address this very significant problem. I'd like to outline what has contributed to this crisis, and there are two main factors; the first is, frankly, there's no interest from the Harris government, from the minister, in providing housing, compounded by two policy directions that they've undertaken.

The first policy direction is that the government is developing programs to increase enrolment in universities without regard to whether universities and colleges and their respective communities have places to find safe, decent, affordable housing. It's fine to expand engineering programs in Waterloo, mathematics programs at Queens or science programs here in Toronto or anywhere else around this province, but when you do that and you have oversubscribed residence spaces and low vacancy rates in communities, that's when you have a crisis.

The Harris government says to the universities: "Make do with what you have. Find your own money if you want to build. Maybe raise tuition fees to help." They say to the students: "Don't worry about the rental market. We're going to make sure that it's there to serve you. If you can't afford to rent, then borrow money. Go further into debt."

The other policy direction is that they've announced their much-touted SuperBuild fund. Actually it really should be called SuperFraud. The fund provides buildings for students to learn in. Unfortunately, the monies cannot be used to build somewhere for students to live. It was restricted to academic places only.

The other major factor is the lack of affordable housing options for students not fortunate enough to get into residence to begin with. We know there's a crisis. There's a crisis in every corner of this province. As students came to school back in September 1999, we heard about these problems. We heard about them in Waterloo, in Toronto; we heard about them in Ottawa, in Guelph. Not only are there more students looking for housing, there are fewer listings of housing for those students not fortunate enough to get spaces. I want to highlight a few of the locations in Ontario.

Here in Toronto back in September students were saying that high rents, low vacancy rates and dismal conditions were par for the course. The manager of the University of Toronto's off-campus housing office, Victoria Austin, said there was an 18% decrease in listings since the same time in 1998. She said quite directly that "The removal of rent control would seem to be the most clear influencing factor." Bachelor apartments in Toronto which used to rent for \$500, maybe \$600, now rent around the \$700 mark. She also said that landlords who used to rent to students are targeting the higher-income market because they were able to raise the rents under the policies passed by the Harris government.

University administration plastered downtown Toronto with posters this fall in an attempt to find places for students to live, people who would be willing to take them in. This is the first time this has ever happened, and it's a shame that it did. The university's 6,100 residence spaces were fully booked, and there will be no new rooms until the year 2003. You can be sure this is going to happen this fall, next fall and the fall after. In fact, the University of Toronto had to book two floors of the Primrose Hotel in downtown Toronto just to accommodate first-year students who were guaranteed rooms to be able to pursue their studies at the University of Toronto.

In Waterloo, the situation was no different. There's a local housing shortage in Kitchener-Waterloo. It was so tight that university president David Johnston has appealed to his employees to make room in their homes for the expected 500 extra first-year students. He did this through a letter to staff, to faculty and to retired employees, to accommodate an extra 290 students. At Laurier, the university also had to make do.

Finally, Kitchener-Waterloo has one of the lowest vacancy rates in the province. In fact the lowest is in Guelph. In Guelph, the students found themselves in tents in September, the beginning of the school year. I met with the school counsellor at Guelph in the fall. At that time they still had students living in music rooms with many other students. This is not an environment which is going to produce the best and the brightest and the best hope for students and their futures.

Thank you to the member from Hamilton Mountain for bringing this very important resolution.

1740

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I'm very pleased to join with my colleagues in this debate and I thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for bringing this to the attention of the House.

I'd like to speak very briefly on behalf of Northern College of Applied Arts and Technology. It has a catchment area of 158,000 square kilometres. It goes way up the James Bay coast, up to Peawanuck, down to just south of the Tri-town in a town called Latchford, west to Hearst and east to the Quebec border. It's a tremendous area of 140,000 people spread over all those thousands and thousands of square kilometres that they have to serve.

Basically, Northern College is broke. They're running this year at a budget deficit of \$931,000. They do not foresee running in the black for the next five years. They look at the SuperBuild fund that's supposed to be out there. I agree with my colleague who just spoke that it really is a fraud. They put in an application for \$14 million for various programs they could put on and they got just \$71,000 out of that, to put on a vet technician program.

The main reason given to the college was that the criteria for SuperBuild are you need high-tech partners—partnering is the big buzz word right—or to partner with a university. Well, we don't have either of those organizations. We don't have a university in that whole catchment area and we don't have any high-tech partners we can partner with. We're not a Fanshawe or a Sheridan College. It's another example of a policy crafted down here at Queen's Park that really doesn't apply to northern Ontario.

This college struggles to try to bring some very basic programs to help people work and stay in northern Ontario. They're looking at trying to develop a trade centre. It looks like they might be able to get the vet technician program going now. We're looking at a mining technology program, waste facility management, hospitality training, as tourism is going to be one of the bigger industries in northern Ontario.

There's a laptop computer infrastructure project. This would be a great little high-tech program for Northern, to attract local residents and students and others to come to do that, but they don't have that high-tech partner because they're not in Kitchener-Waterloo or they're not in Kanata, so they can't partner up with a company that maybe could provide some assistance for that.

They'd like to expand all these different programs. They just don't have the money to do that. They need the cash. There's no doubt about it, a university or college system such as Northern College has to have the financial support to keep going, to keep their campuses with attractive courses and be able to do the marketing to attract the students to come.

Quite frankly, it's a tough job competing against the other universities and colleges in the province with some of the marketing programs they have to try to retain even some of our own students to stay in the area. We have a very small employer population base which is based primarily in the city of Timmins, the only city in the whole area. The rest are spread out through the whole region. They have very small employers, with very small and specific training needs. They really can't specialize for our vast community into one or two courses that maybe some of the colleges do down here.

It's time the minister really took a look at the funding of all the colleges, but especially many of the smaller ones throughout the province, not just in northern Ontario, that have great difficulty trying to keep a critical mass of programming there to attract students to remain at those campuses.

They have housing at the South Porcupine campus of Northern College. It's very difficult to maintain that housing and it's running at a deficit also. I think one of the hard decisions the college may have to look at is possibly getting rid of that housing project on the campus. It would be sad if that happened, because they do have students coming down from the James Bay coast.

Again, let me congratulate the member for Hamilton Mountain for presenting this in the Legislature today so that we can discuss this and bring forward our concerns about the vast importance of post-secondary education in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Mrs Bountrogianni has moved opposition day motion number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1746 to 1756.

The Acting Speaker: Members will take their seats. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Caplan, David
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Conway, Sean G.

Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Hoy, Pat
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc

Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder

Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie
Hastings, John
Johns, Helen
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chns
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Witmer, Elizabeth
Young, David

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette

Crozier, Bruce
Curling, Alvin
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona

Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
McGuinty, Dalton
McLeod, Lyn

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 26; the nays are 43.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
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Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
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Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

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Thursday 27 April 2000

Jeudi 27 avril 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
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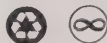
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 27 April 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 27 avril 2000

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

TENANT PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (TOWARDS FAIRNESS FOR TENANTS), 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DES LOCATAIRES EN VUE DU TRAITEMENT ÉQUITABLE DES LOCATAIRES

Mr Caplan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to ensure fairness and reasonable access to justice for Ontario's tenants by amending the Tenant Protection Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 36, Loi visant à assurer aux locataires de l'Ontario un traitement équitable et un accès raisonnable à la justice en modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la protection des locataires.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I welcome the chance to speak to this bill on behalf of my constituents and my neighbours from Don Valley East, half of whom are tenants. It gives me a great opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of the Ontario Liberal Party to tenants, and to put forward some modest yet balanced and very much needed proposals that will bring some balance back to the proceedings at the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal.

I am pleased that so many of my caucus colleagues are going to be joining in this debate. I know they will be speaking to how the proceedings work and how they affect their particular communities. I hope the government members and all members of this assembly will be listening today and will be supporting this bill.

I would like to thank the people who worked on and helped to develop this bill, especially Joe Myers, Elinor Mahoney and Kenn Hale from TAG, Jennifer Ramsay of the Eviction Prevention Project at the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, and the many tenant groups, landlords and other advocates who have contributed their views toward the development of this bill.

Bill 36 is a set of six modest yet very much needed changes, and I would like to take a few minutes to go over the proposals in Bill 36. I am seeking to increase access to the proceedings of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal by implementing the following procedural changes.

First, matters involving security of tenancy—evictions, arrears, damages—will proceed directly to a hearing without written submissions being required.

There was a recent study by the Eviction Prevention Project of the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, and the most telling statistic from that study is the fact that 53% of claims filed resulted in default judgments for landlords. Tenants either don't understand how to respond or are not able to respond. The forms themselves are very confusing. They say "notice of hearing." They imply there is going to be a hearing when that is not the case. After all of these concerns were brought forward, the minister said that it was only an interim study and that the study was only Toronto and didn't have larger provincial implications.

I've spoken to the people at CERA. They said they would love to do a province-wide study. Of course, their funding was pulled by the provincial government and they would love to have it back. I understand of course that the ministry's own facts back up and confirm what is in this study. In fact, some of the legal clinics across the province are saying the same thing: Tenants are intimidated by the process and many see the notices and just move out.

I'd like to quote here from the Waterloo Region Housing Coalition on why they're supporting Bill 36. This is a group made up of tenants, of landlords, of legal services, of emergency shelter workers, of support agencies, of local planners. They say: "Landlords and other members of the coalition agree that all matters involving the security of a tenancy should proceed directly to the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal without the demand for written submissions or disputes from tenants. The number of default orders is alarming, leading us to conclude that tenants are not, for many reasons, submitting written disputes within the five-day period." They go on to say that the stated "intent of the Tenant Protection Act was to maintain the concept of security of tenure. It is clear from two years of experience with the tribunal that this concept is being seriously eroded by the need for a written dispute."

This is not the way justice should be served to tenants. They should be able to appear at a hearing and prepare and make their proper defence. They shouldn't have their cases thrown out because they didn't file the proper paperwork. That's what Bill 36 addresses.

The second change in the bill proposes that notices will be sent directly to all of the parties by the tribunal instead of relying on delivery from one party to another. In the CERA study which I mentioned earlier, one third,

one out of three tenants surveyed, didn't even receive notice that an eviction or an order had been served against them, that an application had been made at the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. I've spoken to landlord groups and they say they feel that tenants are not getting the forms and are having some difficulty with the process as well. I'm taking this element out of the process. The tribunal will serve papers to both parties. This change is not out of order in the normal procedure of government. In fact, it's already done by the Social Benefits Tribunal and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; notice is issued to both sides. Why, in a matter as important as housing, is this kind of procedure not in place? It should be.

The third change is that credit records of tenants will be updated when payments of arrears have been made or when eviction orders are withdrawn, contrary to the practice now. You see, you can have a rental history or credit record which is totally false and potentially misleading to a prospective landlord, and that is, again, grossly unfair. So it's important to ensure that the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal ensures that landlords properly note payments and that any updates are adequately reflected in tenant records.

The bill will also ensure that eviction orders that have not been executed will expire after six months. If they don't expire, they can be used to threaten tenants.

The bill also moves to restore the rules by which landlords will not be able to be granted above-guideline increases if there are any outstanding work orders on the property. That makes sense. Why should a property proven to be in disrepair be allowed these kinds of increases? I will again quote the Waterloo Region Housing Coalition, which said, "The present legislation allows a landlord to request rent increases when there is confirmed evidence of non-compliance with property standards and city by-law. Clearly, this section of the legislation provides no protection to tenants who find themselves in unsafe rental housing. Few repair applications are being filed by low-income tenants since they often cannot afford the \$45 filing fee." This will remove this really unfair practice that's in place now.

Finally, and perhaps one of the most important aspects of this bill, is that so-called catch-up rent increases, maximum rent, will be eliminated. Landlords acknowledge that they have been able to bring these new rents in for tenants resident prior to June 17, 1998. The time has come to eliminate this practice entirely. Landlords have had time to execute these increases, and many were prevented in the past from doing so because their buildings were in disrepair and those provisions were in law. The practice now means de facto economic eviction for tenants. You're seeing 30% to 50% rent increases in some buildings and in some tenancies in the province. It's time to close this loophole, especially since the economic conditions have changed significantly.

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The reason I propose this bill is that tenants are facing a government that talks the talk but certainly doesn't walk the walk when it comes to providing real action to

protect tenant rights and the rights of renters and preserve their access to justice. The government promised access to justice with the new act, but what they have delivered is worse than nothing. It's a process that favours one side over the other; it favours landlords. They've cut back on the hearing process itself, and they've shown an unwillingness to change when real problems are brought to their attention. This bill will make the important changes that are needed. They talk a good game, but let's see if they're prepared to support justice for tenants and Bill 36.

I have many letters of support from across this province. From the Etobicoke-Lakeshore housing task force: "The modest changes to the procedures on eviction and rent increases have been proposed in Bill 36. We strongly support the amendments in this bill." From Etobicoke legal services: "We understand it will be brought forward and we strongly urge the government and the Legislature to support it." From Manitoulin legal clinic: "The bill's procedural changes would be made involving issues related to security of tenancy such as eviction, arrears, damages as well as issues and notices of hearing and updated credit records."

These are all very important amendments that need to be made to create a fair process for tenants. I have letters from citizens of Don Valley West, in fact, who sent me a petition with several names—they've signed their names, addresses and phone numbers. They say, "We tried calling our MPP for Don Valley West to ask him to support Bill 36. We were told Mr Turnbull is not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate? The member for Parkdale-High Park.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is a pleasure to rise in support of this bill by my colleague from Don Valley East. It's also a pleasure, quite frankly, to address this bill in a non-partisan setting. It is very important to use the private members' hour in this context, because we as lawmakers get few chances to address things in progress. I believe this is an opportunity for government members to join with the opposition to correct at least some of the unfairness that exists and that faces tenants in Ontario today.

It is, as are many of these bills, a test of our will to see what is the right thing to do. There are very few times in this House when we can see measures that look, on paper, to be administrative, to look at how the functions of a tribunal, which is the only body in the province that tenants have to dwell upon, can operate in the interests of tenants, and see that as something that can actually enrich the lives of citizens across this province. My colleague has worked diligently with people who are working with tenants directly to focus on those issues which, while seemingly innocuous, are creating a tremendous amount of hardship.

I want to recognize here today someone from my riding, Roy Cunningham, the newly elected head of the High Park Tenants Association. He's here with Bart Poseiat from Parkdale Community Legal Services and a number of other people, simply to bring the message to

you that was brought to me at their meeting the other night: People, predominantly seniors, who have been living in apartments for years on end, are finding themselves in a terrifically unfair situation, the simple fact of not being able to have redress, of not having someplace to go, when their buildings aren't improved.

I can tell you about the frustration of an older couple who are paying \$1,450 for an apartment they moved into a year ago. They're having an above, guideline increase of 7%. They did not get the apartment they were promised at that high-end amount of money. They are so driven with frustration that they're thinking of breaking their lease, of leaving the city, of paying their losses, of not being irresponsible. They simply have no mechanism to make their landlord do what they are paying \$1,450 to make him do. Across this complex of 2,800 different apartments—just the families, let alone the people involved—are people who are living in apartments that have been rundown or that have been under construction for months on end, and they have no easy and realistic means of being able to get redress for their problems.

This situation, the everyday hardship they have—people who have contributed to this province for years on end—is in our hands today. We can do something about it simply by some rebalancing. We're not asking the government members to give up their policy; that's for a different day. Today we're asking them to show a requisite amount of fairness towards people who really have to have some consideration in this House. We are the only people to whom they can turn, and I appeal to you, on behalf of my constituency, to make that right decision this morning.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I am very pleased to join the second reading debate on private member's Bill 36. This bill, An Act to ensure fairness and reasonable access to justice for Ontario's tenants by amending the Tenant Protection Act, 1997, certainly on its face would appear to be dealing with something procedural, but that's not the case.

There is no question that, for their rent, tenants expect to be in well-maintained and safe homes. But under the old system, property owners were discouraged from doing maintenance and work because they could recover very little of the money they spent on repairs, so repairs were not done. In fact, under the old legislation, more than \$10 billion in repairs was required in rental buildings across Ontario, buildings had countless work orders against them, and tenants were plagued by chronic poor maintenance. One requirement under the old legislation that made the situation worse was that an order could be imposed where landlords were prevented from taking above-guideline rent increases if there were outstanding work orders.

The member says that the old legislation favours landlords. Coming from the municipal sector, which dealt with property standards, we were looking for teeth to deal with landlords with respect to rental housing. That is what the legislation that was passed dealt with. Under the old method, every outstanding work order was treated as if it were the same. A failure to comply with an order to

paint a door had the same effect as a failure to comply with a work order for a major structural defect.

Under the Tenant Protection Act we addressed this imbalance. Our goal was not only better maintenance of Ontario's rental housing but also to get tough on landlords who failed to take care of their buildings. We gave property owners the ability to recover the money they legitimately spent to repair a building either through an above-guideline rent increase or on vacancy decontrol. Tenants were allowed to apply for rent abatement for inadequate maintenance. We improved the ability of municipalities to enforce their property standards bylaws, including issuing work orders, which is the guts of what makes this system work: getting it into the hands of the municipal sector. Those landlords who failed to take care of their buildings were liable to higher maximum fines and more immediate penalties.

The Tenant Protection Act addresses problems with maintenance and with work orders, and it balanced the situation. The amendment proposed in Bill 36 would be a step backwards. It would discourage both the construction of new rental housing and the maintenance of existing rental stock, and both tenants and landlords would suffer. So the focus has been put on stiffening the penalties and allowing municipalities to enforce work orders and get tough on landlords, and that in fact has happened.

I want to also address the issue of maximum rent, something the member has failed to address. At this time it seems appropriate to remind the opposition that this year the guideline is 2.6%, the lowest in the 25-year history of rent control. Under Bill 36, maximum rent would be eliminated.

In 1986 the Liberal government established maximum rents under the Residential Rent Regulation Act. This meant that each rental unit in Ontario carried a maximum rent which the landlord could then legally charge the tenant. In 1992 the NDP government left the maximum rent intact when they introduced the Rent Control Act. Under both governments, if the maximum rent was not charged to the tenant, landlords could bank rent increases over an extended period of time. This left tenants vulnerable. They were often walloped with large, accumulated increases all at one time. This was unfair to Ontario tenants. I heard from many tenants within my riding with respect to this system. It was not fair.

As a result, the Tenant Protection Act froze the concept of maximum rents as of June 17, 1998, the day the Tenant Protection Act came into effect. One of the changes was that the rent registry was discontinued and maximum rents would no longer be applicable as new tenants moved in. Since the Tenant Protection Act, maximum rent would only apply to tenants who had occupied their units before the Tenant Protection Act was proclaimed. The landlord is not able to carry over maximum rent to a new tenant. This means maximum rents will eventually be phased out.

1020

The government has not eliminated maximum rent, because it is unfair to retroactively change landlord and

tenant arrangements that were in place at the time of the Tenant Protection Act's proclamation. Under the Tenant Protection Act, a sitting tenant's rent can only be increased by the amount of the annual rent increase guideline unless the landlord applies for and receives an above-guideline increase from the tribunal. There is a procedure in place to do this. Tenants can no longer be walloped with large accumulated increases. I remind the member and the opposition that this year the guideline is 2.6%, and that's the lowest in the 25-year history of rent control.

Our government's goal in the Tenant Protection Act is to protect the tenant, not the apartment. Why return to a system where landlords would be unable to gain fair market value for their rental units and as a result would refuse to build more units, and which would require the government to reinstate a huge system of administration at an enormous, ongoing cost to taxpayers?

I don't agree with Bill 36, which would return to an archaic and unfair system and in effect change the rules, where in fact we tried to change the rules to make it fair for landlords and to make it fair for tenants.

This bill fails to address the issue with respect to rent and it fails to address the issue with respect to maintaining the units. In effect, the title of the bill is misleading.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to speak on this bill and to commend my colleague for bringing forward this very important amendment. The previous speaker seemed to have missed the message completely. What my colleague is trying to do here is enhance and make sure that there is adequate protection for the tenants.

We all know basically what is causing all this. There is a lack of affordable rental units out there. It's nothing new I'm saying. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing himself reprimanded those people who had promised to build affordable housing and said: "You're not doing that. We have given you everything to do that and nothing is done." So the atmosphere, the environment is just completely ripe for the landlords to do what they want to do because of the lack of affordable rental units. There are none on the market.

We know that a new budget is coming out and we know that nothing new is going to come out in the sense of looking after those individuals who need it better. There will be bragging about balancing a budget, but there will be no bragging about people who are paying far in excess of what they can afford for rent.

I want to focus quickly on number 2: "Rent may not be increased beyond the guidelines if there is an outstanding work order." That makes complete sense. The fact is that people have made a contract with a landlord for rent of a place for a certain situation, and what has happened? The place has deteriorated and the landlord continues to contract and collect that money.

I feel that it's quite appropriate that some of these amendments come forward. What the previous speaker had mentioned completely ignored the fact that what it's trying to do is make your law, something that has been really not all that wonderful, a little bit better. He's rejected that to say it's not good to bring an amendment in to protect tenants because it's misleading. That's what it's all about, to ensure fairness and reasonable access to justice for Ontario tenants. They need that kind of justice. As a matter of fact, today everyone is shouting, "I'm paying more into rent than in feeding my child." So the balance is not there.

I feel that we should either encourage the government side—with all this abundance of money they will speak about, to bring some fairness to tenants in this regard—because there's a lot of inadequacy. Of course, as my colleague from Parkdale previously said, it's another day to discuss tenant protection and how we can move forward in making this a better place for those tenants who are paying by far an excess of their income for rent.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): Thanks for the opportunity to speak to Bill 36 this morning, Mr Speaker. It gives me an opportunity to discuss the points under the bill that are related to the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal.

I'd first like to remind members opposite what role the tribunal plays and the reason it was set up under the Tenant Protection Act. It was established as an independent agency responsible for administering the act. Throughout that process, they inform the public on legal rights and obligations of landlords and tenants. This process goes on to ensure a fairer, more efficient process of hearing landlord-tenant disputes and regularly adjudicates on such issues as rent increases, harassment, evictions and maintenance issues.

One of the major benefits of the tribunal is that it has moved these disputes from a court setting, from a cumbersome, time-consuming, expensive court process, into a less formal system of mediation and adjudication. It's not only a less confrontational environment, but it also means that disputes can be heard more quickly and efficiently.

In the past, it used to take months—to some people I guess it seemed even longer than that—to get a court date. Now 80% of the applications are heard within 30 days. On average, members of the tribunal are getting their decisions out to the parties within a week, and many within two or three days. For example, for the year ending on March 31 just past, the tribunal attempted mediation in over 20,000 cases. Under mediation, 6,000 cases were successfully settled and the remaining cases resulted in more streamlined hearings and at a minimum cost to the taxpayers of Ontario. It also dealt with more than 65,000 applications that were filed by both landlords and tenants. At this point, the tribunal has no backlog. It is current within one month's receipt of applications. This indeed does benefit both the tenants and the landlords with quicker resolutions to their issues.

The tribunal has been very effective at not only reducing backlogs and reducing waiting times for applicants; it also benefits tenants, in particular, since they don't have to wait as long or tie up significant amounts of resources while they're waiting for a decision. That was one of the main complaints we had heard before we passed the Tenant Protection Act.

The tribunal operates in a fair and impartial manner, according to the rules of conduct, the tribunal rules and guidelines and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. These are what guide the conduct of the tribunal.

The system deals with all complaints so effectively that it helps all parties in a way not experienced under past legislation or past governments. There is also a greater efficiency under this system. The ministry is indeed spending less money on administration of rent regulation than under the previous system. In fact, administration costs alone were 4.3% lower in 1998-99 as compared to 1995-96.

The essence of Bill 36 jeopardizes the ground we have gained under the Tenant Protection Act. It suggests an amendment stating that all applications to terminate a tenancy or evict a tenant be sent to a hearing, promoting a long, cumbersome process. It should be noted that in many cases tenants do not contest these applications. It should also be noted that under the Tenant Protection Act the tribunal can issue default orders when the tenant does not dispute the application in writing. Once a default order is issued, the tenant still has 10 days to ask for the eviction order to be set aside if they were not able to file their dispute in time.

This is a more efficient procedure, and it was actually carried over to the Tenant Protection Act from the Landlord and Tenant Act. Under the Tenant Protection Act, it is also the policy for applicants to notify all parties involved in tribunal proceedings. This is an administratively efficient and appropriate method that has worked extremely well. Bill 36 would propose to change all of that, adding layers of bureaucracy and reducing the current streamlined procedure that has all kinds of evidence that it is working in a more efficient manner. It would again be a step backwards.

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There are two other proposed amendments to the Tenant Protection Act under Bill 36 and they do have some merit. They include voiding any eviction order that hasn't been enforced within six months and allowing those who have paid any amounts required by an Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal order to ask the tribunal for a statement of this fact. This would help the individual prove to the landlord and to other creditors that they have complied with the tribunal's orders. We note the value of those suggestions and appreciate their intent by the member for Don Valley East.

However, the overall effect of this bill is that it generally discourages investment and does not create a positive environment for the construction of new rental housing in Ontario and the maintenance of existing rental stock. These were the specific areas that were improved

under the Tenant Protection Act. It would impede the efficient administration of the act and ultimately it would be a step backwards for the landlords, tenants and taxpayers of Ontario. In fact, the Tenant Protection Act is aptly named. It's there to protect the tenants. For the reasons I have noted, I will not be able to support Bill 36.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'd like to add my comments to the private member's bill the member for Don Valley East, Mr Caplan, has brought to the House today. I would call it a fair deal, because it addresses some of the problems that both landlords and tenants encounter on a daily basis, and the issues are many. I can tell you that three out of five people who walk into my office or call or send letters deal with housing issues. Unfortunately, the way the situation is now, tenants are getting it from both sides. First of all, there is no more protection from the rent protection act, as it is called. There is a problem with the lack of affordable housing and it is causing a problem with tenants as well. Rents are skyrocketing. That's a problem in itself and everybody knows it, so tenants are getting it from both sides.

I think the bill, as presented by the member for Don Valley East, speaks exactly to the long experience, knowledge and hard work he has put into the matter, the knowledge he has on the issue and the work he has done with many tenants. I think the amendments he proposes are very fair. They don't take away from the landlords; they don't take away from the act itself. They make it better. If the system were changed to work better and smoother for tenants, this would go a long way in improving some of those areas where problems have been identified by both landlords and tenants, especially when it comes to eviction, arrears, repairs and maintenance. That is a big problem.

I would urge and encourage members of the House to support this bill. The best and only thing we can do is give tenants at least a fair chance when they have to appeal on some of the problems they encounter on a daily basis with respect to their rental properties.

My time is running out quickly. Let me say it is an area that must be looked at. Members from the government side are also saying: "There are issues that we have to look at. We have to make it better." I think the private member's bill from the member for Don Valley East is a beginning. It's the vehicle to get there. I hope we can get the support needed and move the bill forward. I thank you for your time.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I've got to tell you that the exercise of this debate, and these debates these days, is intellectually and physically draining. It is at times downright sickening. It sickens me. I listened to two members because the other hyenas on the other side didn't get a chance to speak, but two people have spoken: one from Carleton-Gloucester and the other fellow from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. They both read their speeches, you will recall.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't think it's quite in order in this House to call members on either side hyenas. I would ask the member to withdraw that.

The Acting Speaker: Withdrawn?

Mr Marchese: I did say it and I withdraw it.

Speaker, you will have noticed that those two members read their speeches. They hardly lifted their eyes from the paper as they spoke. Every time these people speak, they read speeches given to them by presumably someone in the Ministry of Housing, and that's all they do. They're parrots. It appears to me that they have no freedom of their own to speak. They never speak from the heart; I don't think they have one.

You have the member from Barrie-Simcoe saying, "The title of this bill is misleading"—and you didn't stop him then, Speaker—but their own bill is called the Tenant Protection Act. That's not misleading. But this modest bill, with these modest changes, trying to bring some fairness to tenants, according to that member who left this chamber is misleading. He's coming back to listen to the debate. I'm glad to see him back. The goal, he said, is to protect tenants.

Mr Tascona: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm in the chamber. I don't know what the member is talking about.

Mr Marchese: OK. Thank you, Joe. Sit down.

"The goal," said he, "is to protect tenants." Who believes that? Who believes that except the landlords who are in their pockets day in and day out, reaching in their pockets day in and day out? And they're protecting the tenants.

According to the member for Carleton-Gloucester, the past bill and the past process to deal with the complaints would take months. Ninety-five per cent of the people who came to those hearings, first on the tenant protection hearings and then on the Tenant Protection Act, 95% of the cases, we were told by the legal clinics, were dealt with fairly and expeditiously. Only 5% of the cases were not. For that they invent a tribunal, to deal with 5% of the cases, a tribunal nominated by them. Most of them are Tories. You know that and I know that. This from the people who said when they were in this opposition chamber that they were going to be different, that they weren't going to make political appointments. No siree, it would all be based on merit. It appears that all these Tory appointments are based on merit.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): How perceptive.

Mr Marchese: Is Garfield interested in my discussion?

The problem is this: This is a government for landlords. They make no bones about it. I learned through a study I looked at that I believe was done in 1992-93 that 76% of tenants don't vote. Nothing has changed since then. They know that and that's why they've been able to introduce a so-called Tenant Protection Act that would support the landlords over the tenants. That's what that bill is all about, and they know it. I know it. The sad thing is that the tenants still don't know it. But if they voted, they would have such tremendous power that this government wouldn't be in power very much longer.

Our job as opposition is to try to reach out to them as best we can. We are trying to reach out to a group of tenants whose average income is \$36,000; 3.3 million tenants, many of whom only earn \$20,000 to \$22,000; many of whom have language difficulties, as they become better Canadian citizens. That's the kind of constituency we're talking about that we're trying to protect, which this bill with modest changes is trying to do, to reach out and in some way bring some modicum of fairness to the tenants.

1040

The member for Carleton-Gloucester says, "The essence of Bill 36 would jeopardize all the gains we have made." What gains? The kinds of increases Toronto and many other places in Ontario have faced, increases in Toronto of \$1,200 a year for a two-bedroom apartment, which these people with their modest wages of \$20,000, \$30,000, \$36,000 are having to pay? That's what we're dealing with. Are those the gains we're trying to protect? Of course those are the gains they are trying to protect, because it suits the landlords.

The member for Carleton-Gloucester was the one who said—no, it was the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, who now has left the chamber again, and several of the others who have scurried about—

The Acting Speaker: It is improper to refer to members' absences.

Mr Marchese: The member from Barrie-Simcoe said that under the old system the poor old property owners were discouraged from doing maintenance. He says, "Oh, my God, there was \$10 billion worth of maintenance problems." Speaker, every year they were getting guideline increases. I should look at the public directly; forget the Speaker. Where did the money go except to be pocketed by the landlords and not thrown back into maintenance? Thus, over the years, they have deferred maintenance problems and, yes, they've got billions of dollars worth of problems that have to be dealt with because they put it off as they pocketed the money for the guideline increases and the above-guideline increases so they could buy other buildings. That's where the money has gone.

If the new system is working so well, why is it that we're suffering such maintenance problems throughout Ontario? Why aren't they spending the money now to do the maintenance? Because these landlords love to pocket the money as much as they can. Because they don't really care very much about that poor tenant who only earns anywhere from \$20,000 to \$36,000 or \$40,000 or \$45,000 a year. It's a crime, I argue.

The member for Carleton-Gloucester says that this bill would discourage investment. Tory members, I ask you, has the Tenant Protection Act encouraged investment? It has not. The Tenant Protection Act was supposed to have created so much housing, to have given so much choice to the prospective tenant. Have we built any units because of it? No. The CMHC, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp, says we will need 80,000 units by 2001. We have only built about 6,400 units at present. Is their

bill encouraging investment? This modest bill is discouraging investment? Do you see how stupid this whole thing is? Do you see why I get discouraged?

We say modest changes; they say, "No, that would really jeopardize what we've been trying to do." The poor public listening attempts to deal with this mess and they say: "Who's right? Who's wrong?" We say we are protecting the most vulnerable citizens of this province in the best way that we can. Legal clinics are doing their best with the modest amounts of dollars they've got to help tenants. They're the ones who proposed these changes, for the most part. They know what they're dealing with because they have to deal with poor tenants daily. Yet this government doesn't want to listen to that. Why? These are the questions you've got to ask yourselves. Why? Could they be so tightly connected to big business and the big landlords that they don't want to listen to this at all?

We New Democrats, and Liberals before us, tried to build non-profit and co-operative housing, because it was the right thing to do. We built housing that was affordable—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: My good friend the member for Dufferin-Peel says we spent weeks debating why it didn't work. Why didn't they try to fix that? If there were some problems in terms of overexpenditures in some area, why wouldn't they just fix that? I'll tell you why. Because their landlord buddies, their developer buddies said, "We can't have that." In the committee hearings, they said, "It's unfair competition." They said to have public housing, non-profit and co-operative housing, was unfair competition.

M. Tilson from Dufferin-Peel, that's what your buddies said. Are you not doing their bidding? Of course you are. That's why you eliminated that program—that's the politics of that—not because it didn't work, and so we scrapped it. You scrapped it on the basis that your private friends, your landlord friends and your developer friends, were going to build housing. They haven't built anything—zip, zero, nada, rien. It's depressing.

I was reading a brochure from my former good friend Isabel Bassett. "It's time for common sense," she wrote then. "There is a better way to protect tenants and increase the supply of apartments," Isabel Bassett said.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Oh yeah, you know her. "Mike Harris is committed to a new form of tenant protection. This is our common sense plan. Tenants will not be subject to unfair rent increases." Oh? What about the guideline increases? What about the vacancy decontrolling, so that when you move out, rents have gone up to the tune of about \$1,200 for a two-bedroom apartment?

Poor Isabel Bassett. I'm sure she didn't anticipate those increases. She would not have known. She could not have been omniscient or omnipotent enough to be able to predict the chaos we've got. She goes on to say, "Mike Harris's government will improve apartment maintenance, safety and security." Oh? With all the

maintenance problems we're having across the province, poor Isabel Bassett could not have anticipated or predicted these problems. But that's the common sense plan.

"Tenants will have a greater choice in the rental market through an increased supply of private sector units." Oh? Where is this increased supply of units? They must be invisible units, because I haven't seen them. Poor Isabel. This wasn't just Isabel; it was all the other Tory types on the other side who said as much, a few of them at least.

Then she says, "Using shelter subsidies, the Mike Harris government will target support to those most in need." Oh? I thought they abandoned this plan. We've asked a question in this regard, and there are no shelter subsidy plans that I'm aware of. That's what she said then. That's what you said then.

It is a pitiful expression. It's a pitiful debate that we're having. I know you people are not listening. I know that. Modest attempts have to be made to try to make you listen. That's why often we talk directly to the public. We say to the tenants, "If the 76% of you who don't vote, voted and understood that this bill is hurting you in the way that it is, you would be booting this government out of office." I hope that day will come.

1050

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I would like to spend the few seconds remaining to suggest to the member who has introduced this bill that I think he has some suggestions that make sense. I think the direct communication to the tenant is a laudable suggestion.

My concern is with the elimination of maximum rent. My concern is that the bill does not recognize that the real problem continues to be the fact that municipalities charge between three and six times as much property tax on apartments as they do on single-family homes. Here in Toronto it is 3.6 times as much, a staggering increased cost that isn't profit to the landlord but is a very direct expense on tenants that directly contributes to the lack of affordable housing in this city and all other cities in Ontario. At the same time, we have a federal government that, in its capital gains regime and its income tax system, is providing extraordinary disincentives to landlords to renovate and, in the case of older landlords, to sell off their properties to people who would now want to start all over and rejuvenate those properties and add new premises.

The fact of the matter is that the bills we brought forward have changed the perspective. There is new construction going on for the first time in almost a half decade. In 1995, when we were elected, there was a grand total of 35 units built in the city of Toronto, at the same time the population was going up 40,000 a year. Clearly the system was broken; clearly it had to be fixed.

I agree with the member opposite that there is finetuning that needs to be done and I encourage him to continue to bring forward those suggestions. Eliminating maximum rent and eliminating the incentive to landlords to bring properties up to code and up to spec is not the way to do it.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I want to speak to this bill, which I obviously have enormous support and respect for, because in my riding 68% of the people are tenants. We get more calls in my constituency office on landlord-tenant-related issues than on any other issue. This is the issue for them. They are suffering from the legislative black hole that is the Tenant Protection Act. There are no apartments being built, as we've already discussed. The housing minister is begging developers to build, and we now have the former housing minister acknowledging that changes need to be made to that bill.

At best, the Tenant Protection Act is a failed neo-Conservative experiment, a failed experiment that has led the housing minister to plead with developers to start building affordable housing. Well, we're not here to plead; we're here to legislate. I would ask the housing minister and I would certainly ask the former housing minister, who just spoke in favour of some of the measures in this bill, not to beg developers to build but to support this legislation.

Let me say something about this legislation. Its title is crystal clear. All we're trying to do here is to begin to level the playing field. At worst, the Tenant Protection Act was an act of political vengeance, rewarding landlords and punishing tenants. The goal here is not to reverse that political vengeance and play the politics of friends and enemies. The goal with this bill is good public policy, taking a flawed act—I would say a fatally flawed act, but at least accepting the flawed act for the moment because it is in place—and trying to improve it: the provisions on security of tenancy, on due process, on the maximum rent boondoggle for landlords, the nightmare eviction orders. An eviction order is not an unusual thing for a tenant to get these days, and because of the lack of due process, because of the loopholes in the act, clearly this is an act which has to be changed.

The member for Don Valley East has brought forth a perfect solution, a modest proposal, and it is beyond my comprehension why this government would not come in, assess these reasonable suggestions, and support something that would improve an act they brought in. We're trying to help tenants on this side of the House. What are you going to be doing when it comes time to vote on this bill?

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I stand today in support of the Towards Fairness for Tenants act presented by my colleague the member for Don Valley East, because I work on behalf of tenants. It's interesting to see that the government puts up speakers who know so little because they have such a low percentage of tenants in their ridings. They have spent no time at the rental housing tribunal representing tenants, as I did yesterday and as I have done on many occasions. My riding, Toronto Centre-Rosedale, has the highest proportion of tenants in the province of Ontario, and I can tell you that the Tenant Protection Act can only be referred to appropriately as the "so-called Tenant Protection Act," because if that was its goal, as the title suggests, it is an extraordinary failure.

Today, in the very brief amount of time I have, I want to focus on one element of the bill that is before us today. In the explanatory note, point 2 says, "Rent may not be increased beyond the guidelines if there is an outstanding work order." Is that common sense or not? Is it appropriate that a landlord ought to be able to seek a rent increase when work orders have been issued on the properties that he owns, or not? It seems to me it is common sense. We had this provision in previously, OPRI, orders prohibiting rent increases. Municipalities could enforce work orders to ensure that the living conditions tenants were subjected to were appropriate.

We have circumstances in my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale, and particularly in the St James Town community, as an example, where problems have persisted, where heating and plumbing systems have failed, where debris is left in stairwells and set on fire, where communities are being subjected to landlords who do nothing to provide security in their buildings, where drug and prostitution problems are rampant and the effect is not only on the security of the people living in those buildings but on the community as a whole.

The government's so-called Tenant Protection Act had a circumstance that I want to highlight to anyone who is watching or listening or will read this today. I stood alongside my tenants from the Rose Park Tenants' Association to work against a landlord who, under this act, had the gall to try and bill tenants for the cost of the removal of their own swimming pool. Not only were tenants subjected to the loss of an amenity they had enjoyed for a long time and paid for in their rent, but the landlord, empowered by this government, had the gall to try and charge tenants for the removal of their own swimming pool so he could increase the number of parking spaces he could rent out.

We've seen lobbies converted to apartments. We've seen community spaces in buildings converted to revenue-generating sources like retail stores. It's time to tip the balance back in favour of tenants.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Don Valley East has two minutes to wind up.

Mr Caplan: I'd like to thank all the members who participated in today's debate. I really hope that all members will be supporting this legislation. I'd like to point out that in the galleries we have Elinor Mahoney, Kenn Hale and other tenant activists. I'd like to thank them for coming and I'd also like to thank them for the help they gave me in putting Bill 36 together.

I've heard some very interesting comments and I'd like to address them. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Housing, the member for Carleton-Gloucester, mentioned all the gains we have made. That is an incredibly puzzling statement, given that there is virtually no activity at all in the construction of new rental housing in Ontario. I'm not certain what gains have been made.

He spoke about the process of the tribunal, and how it's working and it's very efficient. That is not the case at all. There is mounting evidence that people are being denied their fundamental right to access justice, their

fundamental right to defend themselves at a quasi-judicial body. That is contrary to everything that this democracy, this province, this country has been built upon. For God's sake, it is important, it is necessary that we preserve those rights so we ensure that people have the basic right to defend themselves.

He mentioned set-asides, and I should tell you that I have opinions from lawyers across this province who say it is more difficult to get a set-aside of a default order at the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal than it is to get a set-aside of a court decision. That speaks volumes. This is a fatally flawed process. I agree with my colleague who said that. I can't change the whole thing and get the support of the government, or get the support of enough members, but for six modest proposals, six balanced ideas, I ask for the support of all members in the House.

The Acting Speaker: The time for this ballot item has now expired.

1100

MEDICINE AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MÉDECINS

Mr Kwinter moved second reading of Bill 2, An Act to amend the Medicine Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les médecins.

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): I'm pleased, for the third time actually, to rise in this House to debate this bill, and I want to read the bill, which is sublime in its wording but profound in its impact.

It only has 68 words, and it says: "A member shall not be found guilty of professional misconduct or of incompetence under section 51 or 52 of the Health Professions Procedural Code solely on the basis that the member practises a therapy that is non-traditional or that departs from the prevailing medical practice unless there is evidence that proves that the therapy poses a greater risk to a patient's health than the traditional or prevailing practice."

This bill was first introduced on Thursday, May 8, 1997, as Bill 126. It was again introduced on October 29, 1998, as Bill 2. The genesis of this bill is really the World Health Organization's 1989 Helsinki agreement. It was signed on behalf of Canada and, by definition, on behalf of all the provinces and territories, by the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, and this is what it says:

"A registered practitioner shall not be found guilty of unbecoming conduct, to be found to be incapable or unfit to practise medicine or osteopathy solely on the basis that the registered practitioner employs a therapy that is experimental, non-traditional or departs from prevailing medical practice, unless it can be demonstrated that the therapy has a safety risk unreasonably greater than the prevailing treatment."

That is almost verbatim to the wording in my bill, a bill that was signed by the international World Health Organization.

Notwithstanding that, and after this bill received unanimous consent in this House on May 8, 1997, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, in their annual report to members as published in their Members' Dialogue, stated, and the headline says, "Bill 126—Monte Kwinter Private Member's Bill: Executive received an update in June on this bill, which received second reading in the Legislature and was referred to committee. Executive agreed that while the college has already made clear its opposition to the bill, we will prepare to speak out strongly against it again should it be called before the committee for further consideration."

Notwithstanding that, the College of Physicians and Surgeons established an ad hoc committee to take a look at the issues, and what happened? The ad hoc committee on complementary medicine, which studied the issue of regulating physicians who provide non-traditional diagnostic methods and remedies, met for two days of public hearings. The College of Physicians and Surgeons committee report concluded that patients have every right to seek whatever kind of therapy they want. In addition, the committee stated that regardless of the kinds of therapies or practices they choose, physicians are accountable not only to their patients but also to the college, and ultimately to the public at large. I have no quarrel with that; I agree.

Since my bill was introduced, another interesting thing has happened: The Ontario Medical Association has given permanent status to a section on complementary medicine.

Other things have progressed since the first debate on this bill. The United States Congress passed legislation that's going to change the face of health in that country forever. What they've done is pass legislation that allows for the Office of Alternative Medicine at the National Institutes of Health to be changed from being an office to a centre, which means it gets \$50 million worth of funding. In addition, the legislation provides \$1 million to support the establishment and operation of a White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine to study and make recommendations to the Congress on appropriate policies regarding research, training, insurance coverage, licensing and other pressing issues. Again, a very significant step forward.

"Almost two thirds of traditional US medical schools now teach alternative therapies, including chiropractic, acupuncture, herbal remedies and mind-body medicine, a survey found. With millions of Americans visiting alternative practitioners yearly, educators have no choice but to respond to this relentless challenge to evolve. The survey of 125 medical schools found that, of the 117 reporting, 75 of them now include in their curricula alternative medicine."

In our own country: "A new acupuncture program has been launched at Mount Sinai Hospital in conjunction with the Michener Institute and is heralded as the first of its kind in Canada. The program, part of the hospital's pain clinic, will be an important bridge between traditional Chinese and western medicine, said Michener Institute president Renate Krakauer."

Also, interestingly enough, there was a conference on traditional healing to treat menopause in Toronto. A researcher from Columbia University's medical school in New York stated that this is a process that has been tried for centuries and is something that mainstream doctors are now getting hold of. An interesting comment she made was, "In Europe, St John's wort, a botanical used to treat mild to moderate depression, another common complaint of premenopausal women, is outselling Prozac by leaps and bounds."

Another very interesting development is the statement by Dr Russell Joffe, the man behind McMaster University's proposed \$100-million centre for complementary medicine. Joffe said, "The centre will do something quite unique for a western university faculty of medicine, amalgamating research into western and eastern treatments while investigating the roles lifestyle, diet and stress play in keeping Canadians healthy. ... Nearly 50% of Canadians are using some form of alternative therapy, so it's important to better understand how it works and its place in the health care field."

An Angus Reid poll, which asked about Canadians' attitudes towards alternative medicine, found that the majority, 66% of Canadians, feels that the government should be advocating the use of alternative medicine and practices in order to potentially reduce the costs to the health care system.

I want to enter into the record a letter I received from Dr Linda Rapson, the president of the Ontario Society of Physicians for Complementary Medicine. She says:

"I wish to thank you for bringing Bill 2 ... before the Legislature.

"Your bill comes at a time when there is even more urgent need to improve the knowledge and experience of the medical profession in the area of non-traditional medicine. The public will be best served by a medical profession that can take a careful, objective look at various forms of 'alternative' medicine, to best advise our patients. Our long-range goal should be to critically evaluate complementary therapies in the same way we are assessing traditional medicine, in order to provide the safest, most cost-effective and beneficial treatments. This would ideally be accomplished through interdisciplinary co-operation and collaboration, bringing the best of traditional and non-traditional care to the Ontario public.

"We are convinced that the sort of protection for Ontario physicians provided by this bill is urgently needed to ensure that all Ontarians receive safe, beneficial and cost-effective treatment."

It's signed by Dr Linda Rapson.

This is an issue that has been before this House twice. It has had unanimous consent twice, but there has been a dramatic sea change since this was first introduced. I read the quote from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which was opposed to it. They have been silent. There has been no opposition to this at all.

It's also interesting to note that the current Minister of Health, in a letter to a constituent, wrote: "I want to assure you that this government supports freedom of

choice for patients for a range of care options, as long as people are not put at unnecessary risk. This includes physicians who use non-traditional treatments, as long as they maintain the standards of the profession and have the skills, the education and training necessary to provide such treatments."

That's exactly what this bill does. The time has come to move forward. The citizens of Ontario and of Canada are far ahead of the government. I think it's important that this provision be enshrined in the Medicine Act because what it will do is provide doctors with the freedom of choice and, more importantly, patients the freedom of choice to take a hand in the treatment they receive and to be able to access not only traditional medicine—and this is not a substitute; this is complementary—but to access treatments out there that are not necessarily mainstream but have been shown to be effective, safe and, in all cases, part of what the population seems to want. I encourage my colleagues once again to support this—this is the third time. If I can prevail on them, I'd like to get third reading today. Notwithstanding that, let's take one step at a time.

1110

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I'm very pleased to stand today in support of Mr Kwinter's bill. Today it feels like déjà vu all over again to me. I can only imagine what it must feel like to Mr Kwinter. He must be very pleased, even from the last time we debated this bill in this House, that we've moved even more forward. The public is ahead of us and it's time to move on. I don't think we should be in a position ever again in this House to have to begin this debate all over again. It's really good that we have this opportunity to have the debate once more and to discuss the merits of it and possible problems, but it really is time to move on.

As was pointed out the last time around, Statistics Canada says that 3.3 million Canadians see non-traditional practitioners, and the number is growing. I'm one of the statistics that I mentioned here and have been for a number of years, and so are a number of people in my riding. They're quite anxious to see me support this bill again and they're quite anxious for this Legislature to take ownership of it, particularly the government, because they have the power either to move it forward into committee or take over the bill itself, which I'm sure Mr Kwinter would not object to. His goal is to get this thing through. The government should take a stand today and do one or the other. Some amendments, I believe, would need to be made, and that could be done through the process of committee hearings or the government making it their bill.

We've been talking for some time now in this House, certainly before this government and when the NDP was in government, about new, integrated medical systems, the way we deal with all forms and types of medicine, not only after the fact when we're sick, but preventive medicine. This is an opportunity to deal with that in a planned way, so that it becomes part of what we're talking about, part of the system; so that the safeguards

we need to see in place are there and the regulations to protect people are in place. That's the kind of thing that people who use alternative medicine have been crying out for, for some time.

When the NDP was in government from 1990-95, I remember working with our ministers of health, Frances Lankin and Ruth Grier. We were, as governments before us, a part of regulating midwifery and nurse practitioners. We can all recall a time when a tradition that was with us many years ago became almost outlawed from the system and doctors took over. It took a while again for us to say that midwives have been around for eons doing that job and they can do it very well and it's time to bring them back into the system. It took a very long time before, I have to say it, the OMA and others agreed that it made sense in terms of cost-cutting and also in terms of the skills that midwives can bring. The kind of attention they can bring to their patients is really beneficial—to a woman when she is giving birth, to the family and to the whole process. It has become more and more accepted now. Midwives are back in the system; nurse practitioners are back in the system. There's still a lot more work to do but we've all agreed as a community that there's a very important place for them in the system. We have to move in that direction now.

I think it's urgent now because so many people use alternative medicine and have been for a long time. I commend the *Toronto Star*—I saw it in the weekend paper—for doing some work on testing some of the alternative medicine that's out there. I don't think a newspaper should have to do that. I think all of us who use alternative medicine would like to know there are more regulatory rules in place so that when we buy some of these alternative medicines we feel we're protected, that what it says on the label is actually in that bottle. That's an important step we have to take.

In closing, I want to say very strongly that today is an opportunity for all of us to say not only that we're going to support this resolution but that we're going to be done with this initial aspect of the debate, which we've had three times in this House now, and we're going to move it into committee or the government—I know the Minister of Health is very busy and I'm not suggesting that ministers have a lot of time to come to—

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): She's creating new ads.

Ms Churley: Yes, creating new ads, but I'm trying to be non-partisan this morning. It's possible at times, depending on what the government members say, of course. I was a minister once and I tried to come on Thursday mornings. But I wish in this debate that the Minister of Health could be here to participate in this and give us her assurances that she indeed—

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): Anybody comment on your absence?

Ms Churley: I'm not commenting truly on the minister's absence; I'm really not. I'm trying to be fair and say how difficult it is for ministers to have the time available to come to private members' hour on Thursday morning. This is an issue that I hope the minister is

paying some attention to and that she will give us her views on where she intends to take it. I believe she could have a lot of influence on the members of her cabinet and caucus in where they should go in terms of supporting this bill.

I would ask that everybody support this bill at the very least today and that it go into committee so we can take it to the next step and make it the law of the land.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I would like to make some remarks on the member for York Centre's bill. I agree; I think this is at least the third time it has been presented to this House and I have supported that bill on the former occasions. I congratulate the member and provide my admiration for him in his determination to bring this issue forward. You refer to the "Kwinter bill" and everyone knows what you're talking about.

I'm here as well, for the former speaker's information, as the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Health, and I'm probably going to speak out of both sides of my mouth at the same time. I intend to support your bill, but obviously I have an obligation as the parliamentary assistant to express some of the minister's concerns, although it is private members' hour and I'd be voting in my personal capacity. I believe, as I hope members all around this province will, that the public supports the general principles of what the member has been saying.

I might as well get out of the way what the minister's concerns are. They give you these notes that you have to read and I'm not going to do that, but I will comment on some of them.

Ms Churley: He's rebelling. He's breaking free.

Mr Tilson: No, I'm not rebelling, because I think it's fair that members should know the ministry's position on this. You've read part of what she has said in a letter to her constituents and that's fairly accurate.

The ministry has worked with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to ensure that physicians using alternative complementary treatments would not be the subject of quality assurance investigations solely based on their use of these treatments. The College of Physicians and Surgeons quality assurance regulation now has many procedural safeguards for these physicians. Finally, the minister has asked the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council to advise her on regulatory issues related to naturopathy and she will consider their advice carefully as it is received next year. Therefore, it is the position of the ministry, at least, that she cannot support moving forward with legislation in the absence of the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council's advice.

1120

The member indicated that he would ask for third reading today. He may be right, because it has been debated in this House so often. Because of a comment of the minister, however, I would hope he'd suggest it go to a committee and we would have again an opportunity to discuss it, perhaps have the College of Physicians and Surgeons representatives to come forward to the

committee and provide their comments. There are concerns with the bill.

"The ministry believes that the physicians and other health care professions who use the alternative or non-traditional treatments should be able to practise as long as they maintain the standards of practice of the profession, work within the scope of the practice, have skills, education and training for their practice and do not cause serious physical harm or put their patients at unnecessary risk."

I'm sure the member agrees with that. If it's safe, absolutely. If it's safe, if you're practising something, if there's some sort of regulation to make sure the public understand it, or if you're selling some sort of herbs or whatever—I don't want to appear too off on this—but if materials are sold, you want to know for sure that those people know what they're doing. Doctors tell me: "Well, if I have my patient under medication for something or I'm aware that my patient has some ailment and someone else prescribes something else, whether a treatment or some sort of medication, it could conflict. It may be something completely related, and we could have a tragedy." I'm sure the member agrees with that as well.

"The bill would enshrine in legislation professional misconduct guidelines which have historically been dealt with through regulation." I don't know whether that's a fair comment, but that would be up to the member to comment on that.

Finally, and this is an interesting point, "The minister is of concern that no regulated health professional legislation has these guidelines in legislation." I guess that's a fair comment. We're now putting into legislation what other professions have by regulation. This is the first time this has been put forward that I know of. He may know some other professions, but normally these sorts of things are not enshrined in legislation.

She goes on to say, "The College of Physicians and Surgeons has the mandate to regulate the practice of the medical profession to govern the members in the public interest." We're varying from that a little bit as well.

I didn't hear the member comment on the fact that the word "solely" does not appear in this legislation, whereas it appears in the other piece—

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): It does.

Mr Kwinter: You're wrong. It says so. I read that today.

Mr Tilson: It does? OK. I apologize to the member. That's what I was led to believe.

Those are the concerns of the Minister of Health. Personally, as other members have spoken, we're into other things. We're into nurse practitioners. We're into midwives. My daughter gave birth to a little girl back in September.

Interjection: Congratulations.

Mr Tilson: Thank you very much. She lives in California and she had a midwife. In California, I understand, it's common practice, and it's gradually becoming more popular here.

There are many things that our health system simply can't afford. More importantly, there are people who completely support these alternative ways of dealing with things. I had a woman come into my office who had arthritis. She literally couldn't move her hand for fear of pain. Well, she took some sort of treatment, treatment that's being recommended in this amendment to the—is it the Medicine Act? Now she's fine; she's not perfect, but she's a lot better than she was.

So I believe, in my constituency at least, my people support that as long as it's safe. I will be supporting this legislation notwithstanding—and I hope the members realize that—the reservations of the Ministry of Health.

Mrs McLeod: I am pleased to participate in this debate in support of the bill that's been put forward by my colleague from York Centre, as indeed has been mentioned a number of times already this morning, the third time that this particular bill has been presented.

The bill does continue—I want to stress this fact, given the comments that the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey made on behalf of the Ministry of Health, who may have misread the third iteration of this bill—to contain the change that was brought in the second time when the member for York Centre, who was then the member for Wilson Heights, presented this bill, and that is to include the word "solely," so that it clearly states, "A member shall not be found guilty of professional misconduct or of incompetence under section 51 or 52 of the Health Professions Procedural Code solely on the basis that the member practises a therapy that is non-traditional or that departs from the prevailing medical practice" I did believe at the time the member made that change in his second presentation of this bill that it was an important change and I'm pleased to see that he has continued with that in this third presentation of the bill.

It was important, and the member for York Centre read a letter from Dr Linda Rapson, the chair of the complementary medicine section of the Ontario Medical Association, when he presented the bill the second time. I'm going to reread it again because I think it's important to be sure we recognize the importance of including the word "solely." "By adding the key word 'solely' to the bill, we believe you have gone a long way to answer the sincere concerns of some individuals and organizations with respect to the potential for this bill to weaken the traditional public protection we have come to expect from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario." I certainly do not believe that it's the intent of the member for York Centre or the intent of any member of this House to indeed weaken in any way the protection that Ontario citizens have from duly regulated health care practitioners.

The bill was unanimously supported in this House on the two previous occasions that it was presented. I suspect it will be supported unanimously again, and that leads me to say that it is time—past time, probably—for the Ministry of Health to bring this bill forward. If, as the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey has suggested, it's the preference of the Ministry of Health to see

the intent of this bill incorporated within existing health professions regulations legislation rather than stand as a separate piece of legislation, they have had ample time, and probably have ample time ahead of them, to bring forward the appropriate changes to the health professions regulations legislation. In fact, this is an extremely timely point at which to be revisiting this issue and to be opening up a debate about the regulation of alternative medicine and alternative therapy practices, because the entire health professions legislation is under review as we speak.

I believe that the government needs to open an even broader discussion on the issue of alternative medicine and alternative therapies than is dealt with in this particular bill. This bill deals with physicians, and solely with physicians. It opens the door for physicians who are conscientious and responsible users of alternative therapy, who are trained practitioners of alternative therapies, to have that as an option they can present to their patients. The bill really doesn't go beyond that at this point.

I think it's important that physicians recognize they have a responsibility to respond to their patients. Patients come into physicians' offices and ask about alternative therapies. They need to have answers from their physicians. I think it's a concern that so many Ontarians are using alternative therapies, seeking out alternative therapies, using alternative medicine products, and are hesitant to speak to their physicians about them because they believe the physician would disapprove or would not even be legally able to make any recommendations regarding these alternative medicines because they're not within their defined scope of practice now. I believe that the bill essentially allows physicians to accept a responsibility to respond to patients' interest in alternative therapies. This bill is really just one step towards the regulation of alternative therapies that are increasingly used by Ontarians.

I want to take just an extra minute or two and stress the fact that I think it's essential, given the reality of the demand for alternative therapies, that the government act in a way that consumers of health care have some protection against irresponsible practice and some guarantee of quality in the services and products that are offered.

1130

Probably the issue that stands out most clearly as one which demands regulation is the practice of acupuncture. We know that currently in Ontario virtually anyone can practise acupuncture. There are no regulations, there are no controls, there are no limitations. We know the practice of acupuncture has demonstrated its benefits when it is carried out by well-trained, conscientious practitioners. We also know it is a highly dangerous practice when carried out by people who are not adequately trained.

In order to get past the horror stories that start to emerge about the practice of acupuncture, for example, we have to have regulation. Good regulation obviously requires scientific evidence of the benefits of the practice, as well as a clear understanding of where there is poten-

tial harm. I think it is imperative that the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council review the need for the regulation of alternative medicine and alternative medicine practitioners and determine what can and cannot be regulated and how it can best be done.

I acknowledge that these issues are not easily dealt with. I know that the advisory council studied acupuncture for two years back in 1996. We have never seen the results of that report publicly. We know it's now under review again. We know there is a report on acupuncture expected yet again this spring. It is not easy to deal with it, and I don't think we want to avoid the most stringent criteria in terms of the evaluation of what is responsible and what is credible practice. But I think the greatest danger, the greatest potential harm to consumers of health care, is to ignore the issues altogether or to avoid dealing with them.

Where there are benefits, then the Ontario public should be able to access alternative therapies with confidence in the quality of care that they will receive. Where there is potential harm, the Ontario public must be made aware of it. Where untrained practitioners are posing dangers to the health of the population, they must be stopped from their dangerous practices. One of the great strengths of the bill that is presented today is that it opens the doors to addressing these very real issues in a responsible way.

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I am pleased to rise today in support of this bill. I am supporting this bill mainly because of the demands I have had from my constituents for alternative medicine and options in health care during the past five years. My position is that patients should have the freedom of choice from a range of care options. We should signal that, and I think this bill does that.

What is important is that physicians and other health care professionals who use what is called non-traditional treatment—it's non-traditional here, but it's traditional in many cultures of peoples who make up Canadian society today. What is important is that there is a standard of quality, a standard of practice, a standard of care that is maintained and that is similar to other standards in health care, and that the people practising have the skills, the training and the education to carry on the practice that they are carrying on.

I recall particularly a situation where one of my constituents was suffering from cancer, and he was in constant pain. He used to contact my office all the time, asking me to assist him because he needed acupuncture to help with the pain. He had constant pain. He just wouldn't be able to survive without it. He had to pay out of his pocket for this treatment, and it was very costly. He pleaded with me until his death that we look into ways of helping people with some sort of financial help to be able to pay for these kinds of alternative treatments that he required. He passed away a few months ago. The suffering that I saw in this constituent made it just so clear that there are other methods of treatment and other ways of treatment that we should look into. Especially now that we are looking at ways of easing the cost of

health care, sometimes a lot of the non-traditional treatments may be less costly than the treatments that we have in our traditional health care system.

I want to applaud the member for York Centre for pursuing this matter. I want to indicate to him that I'll be voting in support of his bill, and I'll be doing that with the support of the constituents of Mississauga East. I am pleased to support this bill today.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I too want to thank my colleague from York Centre for bringing forth for the third time this bill, which I think is extremely important. I will emphasize the importance in a different light than many people have done. But I want to also commend my colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan, who has expressed most of the concerns that I sometimes hear expressed outside, and again emphasized it in a way that takes care of all those concerns. I have seen no other bill brought before this House that people have shown such interest in, not only inside but outside. But there is one other aspect of it. Let us move it along. I've seen the passage of quite a few bills in this House, and I think it's a comfortable way to move that process into place.

As you know, health care is one of the largest budgets that we have in our system and takes the biggest piece of the Ontario budget pie. I'm sure that looking at ways in which we can address health care in an efficient way will always be the largest and longest debate in this House, and I think this is a solution that can come to it.

One of the main things I want to emphasize is the fact that, especially in my constituency, we have quite a diverse cultural community that uses alternative medicine, and I can say to you that they feel very strongly about it because they have used this in their old country for thousands of years. There are billions of people in Asia, Africa and China, and people here in Canada, who have used what we call "alternative medicine." As a matter of fact, I don't even like the name "alternative medicine." It is medicine in those countries, and may be alternative here, but it has been around longer than the traditional medicine that we talk about here. I think it has been proven in many respects that this medicine not only would help the cost of medicare here but also has proven itself over the years and can be applied successfully in treating the citizens of this country.

We have seen also that almost 70% of Canadians feel that this could be supported and paid for by the government. I think that's one of the grave concerns. But we can see that sometimes this non-traditional medicine, if you want to call it that, can be introduced, and maybe at far less cost than traditional medicine. I know there's concern. A colleague from the government side stated that we've got to make sure this is safe and all that. Of course. The government must have regulations, and people who are practising this medicine must be educated in the field and of course follow procedures that can be monitored.

As my colleague from York Centre stated very well, although he should be disappointed that it has not progressed enough, he and many of us have learned

many things that can make this bill a better bill. This is now ready to move forward, because the longer we keep this out of the system, I'm quite sure there are people who will be deprived of proper treatment. We'll remove the fear so that when they go forward to get these medicinal treatments they don't feel that they are breaking any law and those who are administering it don't feel they are breaking any law. I think the government must act in a responsible manner and say, "Let's make sure that we move forward."

1140

As a matter of fact we now have seen that marijuana, which was completely outlawed at one time, today is legalized. That would be considered to be alternative medicine because it has been proven today to help those who have cancer and relieving the pain of those with other treatments. In the past, one would not only be charged with possession but charged with smoking marijuana itself. There are many areas, and I'm not only looking at marijuana but at many other things.

We also know that our parents have given us alternative medicine, and one would have questioned their authority a long time ago, whether they are able to administer that in any way. I've been healed by my mother's alternative medicine, and it did not come to light that she was doing anything illegal. But again, look how healthy I look and look how healthy millions of people around us look—very healthy. I would give that praise to my mother, who has practised alternative medicine—rest her wonderful soul, she made such a wonderful son—but again she did it in a way to look after me with her alternative medicine. There are many ways it has been applied. I'm just saying that we are prepared and poised in our society here in Canada, blessed by the fact of that diversity, that we can have hands-on individuals who have seen the practice of alternative medicine and who can institute that.

I know my colleague wanted to say a word, and I will leave a minute or so if he comes back.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to, as others have in this place this morning, offer my congratulations and support to the member who has brought this bill forward this morning, recognizing that it is the third time he has made the effort, and say that I'm happy to be speaking on it again. I spoke to it when he tabled it in May 1997 and I'm happy still to be here and willing and able with my caucus to support its intention, both in principle and in fact, and will be indicating this in the vote that will happen here later this morning.

I want to offer him some comfort in that I've had a bill before this House three times now, you'll note, my bill on franchising that I've worked through the system. We're at a point now with the government where we may have something. It won't be everything I've asked for. As a matter of fact, it will probably fall quite short of everything the people we've talked to at the public hearings we've had on this bill called for, but we will have something. I think that's always a step forward. In this place we make gains incrementally. We don't always

get everything we want, but if we get something, if we move the goalposts forward a distance in our time of service here, we feel we've done something for the general public and for the public good. I suggest that what has been proposed here today by Mr Kwinter is in the interests of the public good, will serve us all well and will move the question of how we deliver health care in this province forward quite substantially and significantly. It's an issue we've been looking at for quite some time. I think it's time to take some action and stop dithering and to ask some of those very important questions that need to be asked. Get out there, do a bit of a public consultation, hear what the public have to say about it and then ultimately get on with it.

I just want to put on the agenda today probably three things, some comment on three areas that concern me where this bill is concerned and where the whole agenda of this government is concerned.

One is the question of who's driving the agenda. Always, when things come before us in this place, I think it's important for us to ask the question and to understand, if we can at all, because it becomes quite confusing at times as you try to sort it out, who's driving the agenda? In whose interests is the government acting? Who is being served and, ultimately, at the end of the day, is the common good of the community of Ontario front and centre in the decisions we make? I suggest that if it is for the common good of the people of Ontario, and there's a desire to provide the best of health care, and to make an offering to the citizens of Ontario that is safe and well regulated and understandable and accessible, then we've done our job here; we've done our duties. I don't have any answers to that question, but it's something we all have to think about as we consider the subject before us today and as we vote: Who's driving the agenda? In whose interests are we acting? Why are we making the decisions that we're making?

The second thing that we have to take a look at in this instance and again in other instances as we work our way through different pieces of business before this House is, who is giving leadership around this place? It is no more important or obvious who is or isn't giving leadership than where we consider the question of the reform of health care and the reform of primary health care in this province.

I suggest to the members of the House and to the public out there who are listening that if this government had any real interest in moving the health agenda forward in this province, they would be doing a whole lot more than simply negotiating right now with the Ontario Medical Association a very narrow and, I would suggest, limiting set of proposals that will not do anything to further the agenda of the reform of primary health care or the presentation of different forms of health care to the public out there that will be preventive in nature and promote health in the province so that at the end of the day we don't have to spend the kind of money that is worrying so many as we look at the budget of health care in this province over a number of years now. As we look

ahead to what the cost of health care will be as we consider the aging of our population and the number of diseases we're discovering as each day goes by that are new and responsive to some of the things that we're doing, sometimes, because we haven't thought it out and we haven't allowed into the action more of the players who might have something to offer by way of understanding and alternative approaches, we've not been able to stem the tide or understand or get a handle on some of the new challenges from the health care perspective that confront us.

The question that needs to be asked, that we all need to be considering here this morning as we look at this piece of business, is, who's giving leadership? Where does responsibility for this lie? Ultimately this morning, we can give some leadership. We can take it upon ourselves, because this is private members' public business, to give some leadership, to ourselves indicate to the government by supporting this bill that we think they should be moving today in this way to recognize the contribution that so many of the alternative health care providers out there, or alternative processes in health care, can provide to the delivery of health care in this province.

We only have to look back over not a very long period of time to some of the changes that have come about that have recognized the contribution of professionals who for the longest time in this province for some unknown reason were not allowed to exercise the ability and training and concern they had in their particular profession. I only have to mention a couple: nurse practitioners and midwives. The progress that has been made over the last 10 years in this province has been quite exciting and phenomenal. There is no reason why we can't move forward in this area as well to recognize the contribution that can be made by alternative medicines so that they become part of the mainstream, so the people of Ontario who now are actually voting with their feet and taking advantage of some of these medicines can do that and know that it's regulated and safe and that what they are accessing is the best that's out there.

The third thing that I want to put on the record this morning is the real concern of this, which is the government's concern that if we pass this, it will cost them more money. Over the last five years, they have given all the money away. If this government had sat back, taken a deep breath, taken a sober second thought and considered the impact of their tax breaks to their rich benefactors and friends and how that would impact their ability to be government and offer services in this province over the long haul, they probably would not have done what they have done and impacted in such a negative way our ability as a government to offer the kinds of services that this member this morning is proposing we support here today. I will be supporting it.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to join the debate with respect to Bill 2. Certainly Ontario health consumers deserve reliable access to competent doctors who offer safe, beneficial and low-cost alternatives to conventional medicine.

That brings me to the point I'd like to make. I believe that consumers in our province should have choice. I note that in a pamphlet distributed by Citizens for Choice in Health Care, they claim that Alberta and eight American states have enacted legislation that protects consumer access to complementary medicine provided by physicians. So what we're talking about here is choice, and alternative medicine is clearly an option that people should have access to in our province.

1150

What I'm concerned about, however, is that the bill makes absolutely no reference to the issue of ensuring that doctors who would be practising alternative medicine would have the appropriate training and necessary background to administer that alternative medicine. We know that traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture is an entirely different system of medical science. Complete training in the profession of TCM and acupuncture, for example, requires four to eight years of full-time study. What I'm concerned about here is that we would have western doctors simply moving into the area of practising alternative medicine without appropriate training. Bill 2 makes absolutely no mention of any training requirements, and I believe it would be absolutely essential that the training component be addressed. I look forward to participating in that discussion through the committee process to ensure that we address that.

Support on this side of the House would be in principle for the bill, based on the fact that the current legislation and regulations already allow alternative practitioners to practise within Ontario, and they can practise without the fear or perceived fear of reprisal. I believe that physicians and other health care professionals who use both traditional and alternative or non-traditional treatments should be able to practise as long as they maintain the standards of practice of the profession and work within the scope of the practice; have the skills, education and training for their practice; and do not cause serious physical harm or put their patients at or in unnecessary risk. Bill 2 would enshrine in legislation professional misconduct guidelines that historically have been dealt with through regulations.

Let me turn my focus to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. The college has the mandate to regulate the practice of the medical profession and to govern its members in the public interest. The college decides what, if any, changes they want in their own bylaws, and it is the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario which, if it still has concerns with Bill 2, may be affected with respect to the inclusion of the word "solely." Because what we're dealing with here is a procedure, in terms of what the member wants: "A member shall not be found guilty of professional misconduct or of incompetence under section 51 or 52 of the Health Professions Procedural Code solely on the basis that the member practises a therapy that is non-traditional or that departs from the prevailing medical practice unless there is evidence that proves that the therapy poses a greater risk to a patient's health than the traditional or prevailing practice." That's what we're talking about here.

The bill still places the burden on the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to prove negligence. There is a lack of research available today to evaluate the safety and efficacy of many alternative therapies—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I join in supporting the bill by my colleague Mr Kwinter. It is a bill which is an adjunct to a previous bill he brought forward to allow more options for people to look at in terms of medical treatment. It has in it the safeguards that are necessary to alleviate some of the concerns that others might have.

I know that if he had time to put it in the bill, he probably would have talked as well about funding for the whole health care system and how next week in the provincial budget we will no doubt see the government forget about their latest tax cut and instead put the money into health care, because that option is there. When I hear the Premier say there is no money for health, it reminds me that some of the other provinces are giving tax cuts at the same time they say they have no money for health care.

I remember my friend from Peterborough nodding in agreement with me a few weeks ago when I mentioned in the House that the problem with transfer payments was that the provincial government would get the transfer payments and give them away in tax cuts instead of putting them into additional money for health care. I know my colleague from York would be concerned that, in addition to passing this bill, we would also want to see appropriate funding for health care, because at the present time we have people who have to go to the United States to get treatment; for instance, cancer treatment, radiation treatment and a number of other treatments. We have a long list of people waiting for heart bypass operations.

We have a lot of areas where money could be invested into the health care system, and that money will be there. The provincial Treasurer will get up and say that, for the first time since 1989, the last Liberal government budgetary surplus, they will have a surplus here. That money can be invested in paying down the debt. That money can be invested in health care, which everybody is concerned about. I'm convinced that the member who brought this bill forward would also want to see the provincial government forgo unnecessary tax cuts and invest that money in health care where it belongs.

The Acting Speaker: The member for York Centre has two minutes.

Mr Kwinter: First, I want to thank all the members on all sides who participated in this debate for their support. I gathered from everything I've heard that even though there are some reservations on the side of the government, they're going to support it.

I just want to address those reservations. Number one, this bill addresses the medical profession. It's an amendment to the Medicine Act and we're only talking about licensed medical practitioners. They have the same

responsibility to the cause of physicians and surgeons as they have in every aspect of their practice. A doctor who is not qualified to be a surgeon does not start performing brain surgery. It's the same thing when we talk about alternative or complementary treatments. The doctor will still be responsible to the college for the way he practices medicine.

Those who want to investigate these complementary treatments will certainly have to get the necessary educational qualifications and take responsibility for it. It's important to know that this legislation is already in place in Alberta. It was given first, second and third reading on the same day. I'm hoping I can get third reading today. It is in place in several jurisdictions in the United States. Most importantly, it was signed by Canada in the Helsinki agreement of the World Health Organization with the exact same wording. Effectively, Canada is a signatory to that provision.

All this does is build a platform. It's a very small step but a very important step to allow freedom of choice for the doctor, and most importantly, freedom of choice for the patient. The idea that they can go to a licensed medical practitioner to discuss their concerns about their own personal health and the possibility of alternative—

The Acting Speaker: The time for debating this ballot item has now expired.

TENANT PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (TOWARDS FAIRNESS FOR TENANTS), 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DES LOCATAIRES EN VUE DU TRAITEMENT ÉQUITABLE DES LOCATAIRES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item 19. Mr Caplan has moved second reading of Bill 36. Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

The division will take place after we deal with ballot item 20.

MEDICINE AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MÉDECINS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Kwinter has moved second reading of Bill 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Can I move approval for unanimous consent for third reading.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Kwinter, you may ask for consent that the bill be ordered for third reading immediately. Is that what we're asking for?

Mr Kwinter: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Kwinter has asked for unanimous consent that the bill be ordered for third reading. I'm afraid we don't have it.

Pursuant to the standing orders, this bill will be sent to committee of the whole House.

Mr Kwinter: Mr Speaker, the general government committee.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Kwinter has asked that this bill be sent to the standing committee on general government. Is it the pleasure of the House that that happen? Agreed.

TENANT PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (TOWARDS FAIRNESS FOR TENANTS), 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DES LOCATAIRES EN VUE DU TRAITEMENT ÉQUITABLE DES LOCATAIRES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now revert to Mr Caplan's Bill 35. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1200 to 1205.

The Acting Speaker: Will members please take their seats.

Mr Caplan has moved second reading of Bill 36. Would all those in favour please stand and remain standing until their name is called by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph	Martin, Tony
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	McLeod, Lyn
Bountrogianni, Marie	Curling, Alvin	Patten, Richard
Boyer, Claudette	Di Cocco, Caroline	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Sergio, Mario
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until your name is called.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Johns, Helen	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Klees, Frank	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Marland, Margaret	Snobelen, John
Coburn, Brian	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Stewart, R. Gary
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Tilson, David
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Turnbull, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 31; the nays are 36.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

All matters relating to private members' business now being complete, I will leave the chair and the House will adjourn until 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1208 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AL PURDY

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): It's with great pleasure that I speak in this House to pay tribute to one of Canada's most celebrated poets, Al Purdy.

It has been said that Al Purdy helped to define modern Canadian poetry. He encouraged many young writers, among them Margaret Atwood, George Galt and Susan Musgrave. A prolific writer, his poems spoke of his love of Canada and his working-class roots in small-town Ontario, as well as his many travels.

Alfred Wellington Purdy was born on December 30, 1918, in Wooler, central Ontario, and grew up near Trenton and Belleville. Through his poetry, Purdy left a legacy of life in rural, small-town Ontario. He wrote about everyday living and gave life to the images that define us. In the words of fellow poet Patrick Lane, "He returned poetry to the common man."

I take this opportunity to honour this man who took the images and the people of this province and immortalized them for us all. For me, the work of Al Purdy is an example of how writers depict everyday life, the essence of what has shaped us as a people. His poetry is about the places, the values and all aspects of life. Al Purdy has left us with a long-lasting gift of heritage for future generations.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I am pleased to say that, just like the weather, Northumberland's economic outlook is sunny and warm with no chance of frost. People from the agri-food industry, the arts community, business and the municipal sector have been working hard to establish a Northumberland economic renewal initiative.

As a result, the Honourable Ernie Hardeman came to Northumberland last week and made the official announcement that \$1.6 million would be coming from the rural job strategy program to complement this initiative. This funding goes a long way to help promote Northumberland county as a tourist destination, and will help to create more than 1,000 new jobs.

Overall, this means the formation of new partnerships and alliances in all areas of Northumberland. It also means the agri-food, cultural, business and municipal sectors are all working together to build our community and strengthen the ties that bind.

I am indeed very proud of the many people who got this project off the ground and put the rural economic development proposal forward. Essentially, it is the private sector that will create more jobs and boost tourism in the county. I want to commend them for pooling their resources and expertise to put forward such a fabulous initiative.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):

Further to the report of the Privacy Commissioner dealing with the unauthorized disclosure of personal information by the government savings office operated by the Minister of Finance, I'm sure you and the people of Ontario will be interested in knowing that the government continues to use a double standard with respect to its so-called snitch lines.

The Minister of Finance's tax-cheat snitch line was shut down over two years ago because, as one official put it: "It was not providing much. It was more innuendo than anything else." Yet at the same time, its snitch line to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Community and Social Services continues today. Information on individuals is kept for up to seven years, even in cases where individuals have been cleared of any allegation. This may very well be illegal and contrary to section 39 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, an independent officer of this Legislative Assembly, stated to the Kingston Whig-Standard, which has been featuring investigative reports on this important issue, that she is worried about the anonymity of the lines.

"An irate neighbour can call, an upset spouse. I have a great deal of difficulty with the anonymous snitch lines. ... You have to promote accountability and responsibility if you're going to the lengths of accusing someone."

We're all against fraud of any nature. It takes money out of our pockets, all of us, but the government must be fair to all citizens. Remove all snitch lines, government, and obey your own statute.

SENTENCING

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): In February, members of the PC Party of Ontario had the privilege of hearing an address from Toronto's new police chief, Julian Fantino. In his speech, the chief spoke eloquently about many aspects of the justice system and offered some of his ideas for addressing personal safety concerns.

Chief Fantino's suggestions included making truth in sentencing and protecting law-abiding citizens the primary focus of the system, as well as removing judges from the policy-making process. The expectation is that elected representatives will remove unnecessary obstacles in the administration of justice, allowing police

officers to do their jobs and protect the public in an effective manner.

These initiatives represent a large challenge to the political will of elected officials. Our constituents expect us to lead the charge to create a safer Ontario. Chief Fantino, Scarborough law enforcement officials and the public have expressed frustration with the justice system. I've heard it in town halls and at the door. Thousands more expressed their concerns through my petition to keep Karla Homolka in prison. It is in response to these concerns that I introduced Bill 66, the Judicial Accountability Act. This bill begins to address some of these concerns.

Together, we can start to return truth to sentencing and create an Ontario where people feel safe in their neighbourhoods.

CITY OF TORONTO

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Tonight the Toronto Maple Leafs, Canada's last team in the Stanley Cup playoffs, will take the ice against the New Jersey Devils. I'm confident they will do their best for Toronto. If only the same thing could be said of the Harris government. Yesterday Toronto took a drubbing at the hands of Montreal, which was awarded Canada's first dedicated marketplace for NASDAQ-listed companies. The score: Bouchard 1, Harris 0.

This is a significant slap in the face for Toronto, Canada's financial services capital. Imagine that NASDAQ itself had bypassed New York for Chicago or Charlotte. Heads would roll as those in New York who dropped the ball were held to account. Evidence is scant that the Harris government even lifted a finger to fight for Toronto and Ontario's place as a world leader in the sectors of the new economy. Outworked, outstutled, caught in the trap of their own press releases. Toronto needs a champion with a strategic vision.

This result demonstrates how much help Toronto needs to tell our story to the world. The Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance, an innovative public-private sector partnership, has been formed. The feds cough up cash. The municipalities in the GTA all participate. Big business and economic sectors are at the table. But there is an empty seat and it's got the name of the Harris government written all over it.

Who over there speaks up for Toronto? And where was Mike? To put this in perspective for the super-duper car salesman, you just lost the biggest fleet sale ever.

CLARINGTON BACKYARD FESTIVAL

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to invite all members of the House today to Clarington's Backyard Festival. I'd like to say that the Backyard Festival, which is the municipality of Clarington's way of celebrating the new millennium, is something that each of us should try to set time aside to participate in.

From April 29 to May 22, there are 21—just count them—special events of interesting attractions and workshops planned for the people not just of Clarington but all of Durham, indeed all of Ontario.

The Backyard Festival will be launched this Saturday afternoon with a celebration at the Clarke Museum and Archives where it celebrates its 30th anniversary as a museum in Ontario.

Some of the other events are the Kinsmen's Home Show; the May 6 Maple Festival in downtown Bowmanville; a fruit and wine festival scheduled for May 13 at Archibald Orchards and Wineries, a must-attend event; a workshop at the Visual Arts Centre; and the Courtice Lions Club Carnival on May 18. There will also be racing at Mosport Speedway on the last three Saturday nights in May. There will be a Mother's Day Festival at the renowned Bowmanville Zoo on May 14, and a special tea which will be hosted at the Bowmanville Museum by Charles Taws and Ellen Logan. This is another event that celebrates the traditions of our past.

The grand finale will be held on May 22, a great display of fireworks to be held on Victoria Day weekend. How appropriate.

I extend a sincere invitation to everyone here and everybody who is watching today.

1340

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): The Mike Harris government is spending at least \$5 million in taxpayers' money to convince people that it actually has a plan for health care. But the only people who will be convinced are those who don't actually ask for a copy of the plan.

If you called the 1-800 number in response to the first \$3 million worth of ads, you could get your name put on a list to receive the plan when it was ready in, we were told, three to six months.

Somebody in the government's highly paid PR department must have pointed out that it might be a good idea, if they were going to run another \$2 million worth of ads, to actually have a plan they could send out to the few people who might not be convinced by seeing, "We have a plan," spelled out on their television screen several times a night in prime time.

So the current round of multi-million-dollar ads do indeed show a plan, and you can ask to have one put in the mail, which might seem to be an improvement over the blatantly false advertising of the first round. You might think so, unless you look at the plan: the same plan that was sent out just before the last election, also at taxpayers' expense, with a couple of interesting changes. Last April the government said they would move towards a four-week maximum waiting time for cancer treatment. They didn't hit the target, so they just removed that from the plan. The document they sent out last spring before the election said they would improve ambulance access to hospitals. Well, we've had more emergencies on

critical care bypass than in the history of this province, so they dropped that out of the plan too. And guess what else? They left out the graph showing the federal government was increasing spending for health care.

So the advertising continues, but is this advertising really about health care?

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Speaker, you will know that in a very short time members from each party will stand in a relatively non-partisan way and speak to the day of mourning out of respect to workers who were injured or died on the job.

But I want to point out during this part of the proceedings that because this government has left so many injured workers and future injured workers out in the cold by virtue of killing the Occupational Disease Panel when they rammed through their anti-worker, anti-injured worker Bill 99, the Ontario Federation of Labour has decided that if the government won't do the job for injured-workers, they will. The Ontario Federation of Labour, under the leadership of Wayne Samuelson, has announced that it's going to begin a province-wide campaign called A Job to Die For. What they are doing is bringing to the attention of workers across the province—whether they work in a factory, a restaurant, an office or a hospital—that they are exposed to chemicals which could lead to things like to asthma, emphysema, lung cancer, liver cancer, breast cancer, colon cancer, heart disease, hepatitis C, tuberculosis, neurological damage—the list goes on—and yet it sometimes takes decades for these diseases and illnesses to show themselves.

If the public has questions about what they are exposed to, call 1-800-788-0227. The Ontario Federation of Labour is stepping in where this government has stepped aside.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr David Young (Willowdale): As the Toronto Maple Leafs prepare to do battle with the forces of darkness, I thought it would be appropriate to reflect upon the Toronto-Ottawa series, the so-called Battle of Ontario, as it parallels with the battle for Ontario's health care dollars.

Ontario's capital, Toronto, has a plan to improve health care for Ontario's citizens. All we need is the \$1.7 billion that the Liberals have cut on an annual basis since 1995. Ontario's nurses, doctors and hospitals agree with this position.

Canada's capital, Ottawa, on the other hand, has responded with a feel-good television ad depicting Canada as some kind of jigsaw puzzle. Despite the fact that the little girl in the ad is obviously well qualified for membership in the federal Liberal caucus, the foggy message bears a distinct resemblance to the Ottawa Senators' trap. You'll remember the trap strategy in the

Battle of Ontario. Although the details of the trap are best left to hardcore hockey fans, suffice it say that the trap's purpose is to induce a kind of stupor in opponents and fans alike.

Despite their best efforts, the trap did not work for the Ottawa Senators, and it won't work for the wannabe senators in the provincial and federal Liberal caucuses.

Canadians want hockey, not hypnosis, and Ontarians want their health care dollars back now, not hackneyed Liberal symbolism.

One more thought: Go Leafs, go.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment.

Bill 28, An Act to proclaim German Pioneers Day /
Projet de loi 28, Loi proclamant le Jour des pionniers allemands.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

This bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I ask for unanimous consent to introduce a private member's bill for first reading on behalf of Ms Martel, who couldn't be here today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

OAK RIDGES MORaine GREEN PLANNING ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT ÉCOLOGIQUE DE LA MORaine D'OAK RIDGES

Ms Churley, on behalf of Ms Martel, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 71, An Act to freeze development on the Oak Ridges Moraine and to amend the Planning Act to increase and strengthen the protection of natural areas across Ontario /
Projet de loi 71, Loi imposant un moratoire sur les aménagements dans la moraine d'Oak Ridges et modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire de manière à accroître et à renforcer la protection des sites naturels partout en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Does the member have a short statement?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Yes I do, Mr Speaker. This bill is somewhat similar to the bill of the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, Mike Colle, and I congratulate him on his bill. Some Liberal members said when I introduced my bill that we've already done that. In fact, they haven't. What my bill does is place a development freeze on the Oak Ridges moraine, to continue until a policy statement dealing with the moraine is issued under subsection (3). But my bill also goes further than the Liberal private member's bill. It makes amendments to the Planning Act, to green the Planning Act again so that all environmentally sensitive areas across the entire province are dealt with under this act.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 23.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

DAY OF MOURNING

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to seek unanimous consent for all three parties to make a statement with respect to the day of mourning.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Thanks, to the members, for that unanimous consent. Tomorrow is the national day of mourning for workers killed and injured on the job. This is an important opportunity to honour these workers and also to recommit ourselves to workplace health and safety.

As the flags outside the Legislature fly at half-staff tomorrow, let us recall tragedies such the Hogg's Hollow cave-in of 1960, which took the lives of five construction workers. Those deaths ignited public concern over workplace health and safety and paved the way for our modern-day Occupational Health and Safety Act.

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As the Minister of Labour, enforcing these laws and ensuring the health and safety of Ontario workplaces is one of my most critical responsibilities. Continual improvement of our health and safety record is a top priority for our government, and for me personally.

We made some major changes shortly after we took office, and with the help of our partners in the health and safety system, progress is being made. There is a single focus on prevention and a prevention strategy to help us reach our goals, occupational exposure limits are being updated for the first time in 13 years, and the number of inspections and orders issued has risen 35% and 57% respectively since we took office. The number of workers killed and injured on the job continues to fall every year. We are headed in the right direction, but obviously more needs to be done.

As we all know, one area needing special attention is young workers. They are often ignorant of the perils in the workplace, and many members of this House across all sides have brought this issue directly to my attention. The health and safety system is moving to protect these workers and to prevent future tragedies. It is educating them on what to expect and what to look for when they go to work for the first time. But we can't just rely on the health and safety system. We all have a role to play, as legislators, parents, employers and employees.

A balanced approach of prevention, inspection and enforcement has helped make Ontario's workplaces among the safest in the world. I am committed to taking us to the top, to seeing that we have the safest and healthiest workplaces and workforces on the globe. Today I ask for your help in that regard, and I ask you now to join me in honouring all dead and injured workers with a moment of silence. I'll withdraw that, Mr Speaker, and will wait until after the other statements are made. Thank you.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I am honoured to stand here today and, with the workers and managers of our country tomorrow, to remember, reflect on and honour those workers who have been killed, diseased or injured on the job.

Tomorrow, many of us will be wearing the black armband. This one was given to me by Julian Dionne from the Workers' Health and Safety Centre, and it says, "Fight for the Living." That's the message that I think every one of us wants to get across today. We remember and we honour those who have passed away, but we must reflect on their tragedy and improve the future of every working person in Ontario.

I believe it is incumbent on us today to put aside ideologies and political differences. Today is about remembering, tomorrow is about reflecting, but always remember fighting for the living so that the workplace becomes safer, so that men and women can go to work and their loved ones can expect that they will return.

The statistics are frightening. According to WSIB officials, on an average working day the workers of Ontario suffer one fatality, three amputations, 70 perman-

ent disabilities and 500 lost-time injuries. If you look at the deaths over the course of the last five years, these are again alarming statistics. The total deaths in Ontario over the course of the last five years are 2,231. These statistics are supplied by the WSIB. Allowable deaths in Ontario are significantly less, and we must address that in good, sound legislation. There are only 1,444, far too many, but as you can see, there's a significant gap between the total deaths and the allowable deaths, and we have to address that.

The Minister of Labour pointed out the Hogg's Hollow tragedy. We must always remember that we have to learn from the tragedies. We can go to any sector of Ontario, any part of Ontario, and find those. For example, in my own home region in the last 164 months there have been 31 lives lost on Inco property; since 1984, 14 lives lost on Falconbridge property. Over the course of the last few years, too many men and women have died in the workplace; certainly at Falconbridge and Inco, to mention only two. We have Jacques Frenette, Joseph Cote, Michael Jess, James Mercer, Jerome Kieley, James Plummer, Bert Bottrell—all young people, all with an opportunity snuffed out because our workplaces are not safe enough.

So what must we do in order to improve this workplace? It's very simple. We have to pass sound legislation, and in order to do that we have to work co-operatively. We should commit ourselves today and tomorrow to doing just that. We have to look at what is being introduced in this House. I think of the legislation by the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North, Mr Gravelle's Bill 10 on health and safety. That's a very good bill, worthy of debate, worthy of discussion.

I look at programs. The United Steelworkers of America, District 6, offers a health and safety educational program that is without a doubt tops in this country and could form the model for anyone to follow. Anne Rinneard and Al McDougall must be commended because this week alone they will have seen 29 schools, 3,500 high school students, in Sudbury, North Bay, and this year they're including Timmins. They are teaching workplace safety. They are talking about the Dave Ellis story, the young student whose life was snuffed out the second day on the job at a bakery. We must learn from the video that his father, Rob Ellis, helped produce. We must learn from the programs such as District 6 of the United Steelworkers of America is providing the students. We must learn that opposition and government politicians alike have good ideas about ensuring their safety in the workplace.

In summation, I have two points. I pledge our party's support for co-operation in the establishment of a workplace carcinoma committee. I believe there has to be a multi-ministerial approach to this. I would ask the Minister of Labour, who answered the question in a very fair manner last week, to act on that answer and to establish that committee. That committee can save lives, can improve the workplace, and certainly we could all look back very proudly and say we have saved at least

2,100 lives because we chose to establish a workplace carcinoma committee.

Finally, we must ensure that we always keep mandatory inquests in place in mining and construction deaths so that we can learn from those needless, tragic deaths and so we can continue to say, "We fight for the living."

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On behalf of the NDP caucus, I'm also very proud to rise today and pay our respects to those workers who were injured and have died on the job. As we talk about the statistics here today and talk about the things that have been done or that need to be done, we need to remember that the reality and the history of health and safety legislation, workers' compensation, came about because there were people who fought for that right. There's no government that really can say they were bestowing things upon working people out of the goodness of their heart. It came about because working people joined together. The labour movement—the union movement—has played arguably the single most important role in ensuring that we have adequate and sufficient legislation to protect workers in the workplace.

So often people think about workplace accidents as just fatalities and injuries, and as shocking as those numbers are—398 fatalities in 1998 and 345,831 injuries, totally unacceptable—what this doesn't speak to, however, I say to my colleagues in the Legislature, is the number of people who die from workplace illness and disease.

1400

In 1998 there were 23,100 cancer deaths in Ontario. Research done by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences in the United States estimates that between 20% and 40% of all cancer is related to occupation. But because sometimes it takes 20, 30 or 40 years for that illness to show itself, it's often very difficult to make the connection between cancer—and let me say parenthetically that far too easily in our society we say someone died of cancer as if it was normal or natural. There is nothing normal or natural at all about dying of cancer. The fact that it takes so long for these cases to show themselves means there are workers and their families who are experiencing injuries and death, and it's not being reported and it's not being compensated.

As much as I appreciate the Minister of Labour recognizing this is the 40th anniversary of the Hogg's Hollow disaster of 1960, which of course was a major impetus in ensuring we started down the road, it's far from over, far from completed. I say "respectfully" because we do this as much as we can in a non-partisan fashion, but I want to say to the government and all members of the House that we can't afford to say the job is ever done. When we have tens of thousands of Ontarians dying of cancer and a large percentage of those deaths are caused by exposure in the workplace, we still have as big a job in front of us as the labour movement had in 1960, and those labour leaders who came before then.

Let me close by saying that tomorrow, as has been mentioned, many of us will be at places of honour in our communities. I, along with colleagues I would think from all parties in this House from Hamilton, will be at Hamilton city hall where I'm proud to say I was a member of council when we introduced the first monument to injured workers ever allowed on city hall property in all of Canada. In fact, the Workers' Health and Safety Centre highlights our monument in the leaflet they put out for this year's Day of Mourning.

Members of the Legislature, it's not enough to stand up once a year and say, "We care." It matters every day. If you're talking to people who have faced death, if you talk to Rob Ellis in terms of what it meant to lose David from his life, then we're not just talking about middle-aged industrial workers when we talk about health and safety; we're talking about our children who need to be protected. They need to have laws there and they need to be advised of what those laws are. It's unacceptable that a 16- or 17- or 18-year-old goes out to do a part-time job in the summer so they can save enough money to go to school and they die on the job. Unacceptable. The ability to change that is in our hands.

Yes, let us mourn the dead. Yes, let us fight for the living. Let us put legislative action where sometimes all we hear is rhetoric.

The Speaker: I would ask all the members and our friends in the galleries to rise and join us in a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker: I thank all the members.

MEMBER'S PRIVILEGE

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I rise today on a point of privilege. As prescribed by the standing orders, I filed the appropriate notice with your office yesterday.

I believe that the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore has violated my rights as a member. With respect to my private member's bill, Bill 36, which was debated here in this chamber this morning, Mr Kells has said the following to a constituent in a letter, a copy of which I provided to you with my notice. He states: "This will acknowledge receipt of your letter regarding the private member's bill put forth by the member for Don Valley East. As you know, private members' bills never receive support from the government as they are designed to oppose existing legislation and embarrass the government. This is well understood because it is the prescribed purpose of the official opposition to oppose."

The standing orders provide that privileges are rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by members of the House individually conferred by the Legislative Assembly Act and other statutes or by practice, precedent, usage and custom.

One of my rights, and one of the most important practices that I undertake as a member, is to propose private members' legislation. I believe it is my right to

have it debated by the members of the Legislature under the assumption that it will be treated as all other matters of business are, and that's with respect. I think that you would agree that the right of members to propose bills and that the time we have set aside for private members' public business are in no way pro forma processes with preordained outcomes determined by party affiliations. To suggest that my matter will be dealt with in a manner other than one of an honest debate—the normal practice of this House—I believe impugns directly my rights and privileges as a member to submit these pieces of legislation.

I'd like to reference for you Speaker Stockwell's ruling of January 22, 1997. He stated that the writing in question conveyed "the impression that the passage of the requisite legislation was not necessary or was a foregone conclusion, or that the assembly and the Legislature had a pro forma, tangential, even inferior role in the legislative and lawmaking process, and in doing so, they appear to diminish the respect that is due to this House."

I believe that in sending this letter, the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore has diminished the role of my right as a private member to propose legislation and has, through his statement, confirmed his contempt, not only for me but for my rights and for the rights of my colleagues and all members of this House to participate in this important aspect of the legislative process.

In the January 22, 1997 ruling, Speaker Stockwell said of the document in question at the time that "a reader of that document could be left with an incorrect impression about how parliamentary democracy works in Ontario, an impression that undermines respect for our parliamentary institutions."

I believe that the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore has both violated my privileges personally as a member of this House and I strongly believe that he has clearly shown contempt for the proceedings of this House and for the very serious debate that takes place during private members' public business.

I seek your ruling on this matter, whether the member has in fact violated my rights as a member, and if you feel that he has not done so, if he hasn't done that to me personally, I request that you also rule whether or not the member has acted in contempt of this House.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The government House leader on the same point of privilege.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): It's odd that the member opposite, in his debate or his presentation with regard to privilege, should in fact breach a most sanctimonious privilege that we all have in this Legislature—not sanctimonious. I'm sorry, I'll withdraw that. Sacrosanct. That was the engineer in me, sorry. The member opposite is suggesting that because one member in this Legislature expressed an opinion which he does not agree with, that member should be silenced, that member should be prevented from presenting his particular views on a matter before this Legislature or in this Legislature or about this Legislature. Surely the most

important privilege we all have in this Legislature is that we can speak our free mind and that freedom of speech is absolutely at the core of this Legislative Assembly.

Mr Speaker, this member is suggesting to you that you should have the right, or any member of this Legislature should have the right, to shut down debate, muzzle a member from making a statement on what he believes or what he doesn't believe. Mr Kells, or the member from Etobicoke West, may have been right or may have been wrong. That's not the issue. The issue is that Mr Kells and every other member of this Legislature has the right to express his views and should not be muzzled by another member of the Legislature. This particular point of privilege is a disgrace.

The Speaker: I thank the member for the point of privilege and the government House leader. I will reserve my judgment, and I will rule on that. I thank the member for advising me yesterday, and I thank both members for their input.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin question period, we have in the members' west gallery the mayor of the town of Englehart, Bettyanne Thib-Jelly, with us today. Will the members join in welcoming her.

1410

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My questions today are for the Chair of Management Board. Minister, you now have had a full 24 hours to refresh your memory in connection with the matter I raised in this House yesterday, and in particular about a land deal that saw a 25-foot strip of land become attached to a second piece of land, an old cemetery which was surely worth less than \$500,000, which will now be worth close to \$25 million in terms of the amount of money that could be grossed with the business that is about to be established on that piece of land: an old, worthless cemetery converted into a \$25-million product as a result of a 25-foot strip of land.

My question to you is very simple: Was this 25-foot strip of land the subject of a public tender?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The Leader of the Opposition raises an important question. As he knows, or should know, this particular transaction is not closed. It was a sale that will be reviewed by the senior management team and the auditors. If there is anything that is not in compliance with the new policy, it will be rejected and will not close. If there is anything irregular that the police should have a look at, the police will investigate it as well.

Mr McGuinty: Speaker, you, like myself, will have heard that no answer was given by the minister just now, which confirms for me—and I can supply the information to this Legislature—that there was no public tendering of this 25-foot strip of land.

Now that we know there was in fact no public tendering of this 25-foot strip of land, the question becomes, why did you involve yourself in this matter, and why was there no public tendering involved in a 25-foot strip of land which rendered a relatively worthless piece of land into a very expensive piece of property which held tremendous economic potential for one bidder, and one bidder alone? Why were you involved, and why was there no public tender?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The first answer is that this transaction is not closed. It will be reviewed. If the forensic auditors feel there is a need to refer this to the police, the police will be involved. That is what you would expect of a government that wants to conduct its business in an open and accountable fashion.

Secondly, when you talk about my involvement, if you are talking about the memo that referred to the fact that there was a request for information, I explained that yesterday, and I'll explain it to you in some detail. It's quite routine and common that when members of caucus or of this Legislative Assembly phone for information, our office facilitates that through the Ontario Realty Corp. Bob Budd's was the signature on that memo. He has confirmed that it was a request from the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. He had a letter from his constituents asking for information, and that is what was arranged to get that information.

Mr McGuinty: If the minister wants to speak to the matter of the memo, then let me remind him of something he said yesterday. Under cross-examination by the media, he said the following: "The ... agreement was entered into a month before this briefing was requested."

You said that the agreement was entered into a month before this briefing was requested. Minister, you know and I know that this 25-foot strip of land didn't become the subject of an agreement until after your memo. Your memo came first, and then the 25-foot strip of land became part of a new deal, a 25-foot strip of land which was not put out for public tender.

Minister, my question to you then is—let's look at this now. We've got a memo. It talks about ministerial involvement. We've got a piece of land that was never put out to public tender. And now we discover that your memorandum came out before the 25-foot strip of land deal was put together. Are you telling me, are you telling Ontario taxpayers, that this is just a matter of pure coincidence?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Yes, exactly. The purchase and sale agreement for the cemetery, after it had been offered for sale, was entered into, I believe, on April 17. Mr Kells received a letter from his constituent, requested information from our office, and we arranged for that information to be provided by the Ontario Realty Corp board of directors. This transaction is not closed; it was

conditional on zoning. It will be reviewed, and if there's anything improper or if it doesn't comply with the new procedures, it will not close. Secondly, the matter will be referred to the police if there are irregularities around it.

I don't know why you're not comfortable with the fact that the police are qualified to do investigations. The forensic auditors are reviewing this. We're taking the steps that are proper to get to the bottom of this and get the answers.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. New question.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, if you had any real and genuine concern about what was happening with the ORC, the very first thing you would do is put a padlock on the door. You would freeze all transactions. And you'd do that yesterday, not today.

Let me draw to the minister's attention what this matter is really all about. We now know that there was no public tender. We now know that the minister himself was involved. We now know that the name of the buyer—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr McGuinty: The name of the buyer in this matter was one George Damiani. The minister will know that George Damiani is a long-time Conservative member. You will know that he has donated lots and lots of money to the PC party. You will know that he is a former business partner of one Frank Ciccolini. You will know that the Ciccolini family is a very important part of the fundraising process for the Conservative party. You will know that Mr Damiani is a friend and neighbour of Al Palladini's. It seems to me that any friend of Al Palladini is a friend of yours.

You know how this matter looks, Minister. We've got a memorandum, ministerial involvement, no public tender and a friend of the Conservative party. You tell me why we shouldn't come to another conclusion—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition's time is up. Take his seat. Stop the clock for a quick moment.

The Minister of Education will come to order. I've yelled a couple of times. Yesterday I warned her. This is a warning again today. I won't warn her again; otherwise, I will name her. We can't continue on when you're shouting across while a member is trying to ask a question. When you receive a question, you don't like people to shout. I said it yesterday. It goes for today as well. It's your last warning. If you do it, I'm going to have to name you.

The Chair of Management Board. Start the clock, please.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Our government is trying to get to the bottom of a number of important questions. In the process, it's at work with a forensic audit team and with the police. This is the proper process to get the answers to these important questions and get to the bottom of this.

I don't think it's proper that you loosely throw around accusations which slander people with good reputations in this province. Our process is one that's open and accountable in trying to get to the bottom of this by using the proper authorities that are trained in these matters, such as the forensic accountants and the police.

Mr McGuinty: The problem with this minister trying to get to the bottom of this is that he himself is at the bottom of this. You know what I think, Speaker? I think that these people who sit on your right-hand side think they're in charge of one big candy store. They intend to dole out candies and dole out special favours and engage in secret deals and special deals for their friends. That's what I think this is all about. This is a secret deal benefiting their friends, and it's coming at the expense of Ontario taxpayers. If you really had an interest in doing the right thing in here, just prior to resigning you would put a padlock on the ORC so we can clean out the stink and the mess that's taking place there as we speak.

Hon Mr Hodgson: To the Leader of the Opposition, despite your partisan rhetoric we are trying to get to the bottom of these important questions. We have taken the steps necessary to get evidence that will lead to conclusions that answer these questions that have been raised and that make sure the taxpayers have been served well, and if not, that there are consequences taken.

The proper process for that is that we had the senior management team review past transactions. We went looking to see if there are ways we can improve the operation or if there has been anything that may be amiss in the way it conducted its past transactions. This investigation will go on until we are satisfied we've answered all the questions.

The auditor for the Management Board came in. When they noticed irregularities they hired forensic accountants, who asked the police to come in when they noticed irregularities. The police are investigating now. You know that and you know that is the proper thing for a government to do, to be open and accountable and get to the bottom of these issues.

1420

Mr McGuinty: I'm sure the minister feels the Pope should be declaring him to be a saint before he even dies, but the fact of the matter is that you have done nothing but get in the way of getting at the truth in this matter. I have put five questions to you today already and you have refused to answer those. I want to make that perfectly clear. I have given this guy lots of opportunity to bring out the truth in connection with this matter and he has refused to do so.

Let's take a look at the facts one more time. We have a memo that talks of ministerial involvement. After that involvement, one developer is given a secret deal to the tune of \$25 million. That developer happens to have friends at the cabinet and in the Conservative Party. If this doesn't stink, Minister, I don't know what does.

I think you guys have gotten carried away at the candy store and have lost perspective. You have forgotten what your responsibility truly is in this province and in

government. You're supposed to represent the interests of taxpayers, and these people are looking after their friends.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I know the Leader of the Opposition is desperately trying to get his name in the news again tomorrow on some partisan rhetoric, when we're trying to get to the bottom of these important questions and are just following the proper process.

If you're stating that you don't have confidence in the forensic accounting procedures and that you don't have confidence in police investigations, I disagree with you. I think this is what due process is all about: finding the evidence and then taking the appropriate steps. That's what we're attempting to do and that's what will be done under our government.

For you to stand up and say that you care about the taxpayers now is quite a conversion for a Liberal who, when your party was in power, hiked taxes every time you took a pause, over 30 times, and killed jobs in this province. To stand around now and say you care about the taxpayers is real hypocrisy.

PRIMARY CARE REFORM

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. For months we've been asking you what is going on in your closed-door negotiations with the doctors at the Ontario Medical Association. We now understand that within the last 24 hours a deal has been reached. We'd like to know the details. In particular, we'd like to know, does the deal continue the inadequate status quo where more and more communities, more and more families, don't have a family doctor, or are we going to see some real primary care reform? Are we going to see greater utilization of nurse practitioners? Are we going to see doctors, nurse practitioners and nurses working in teams, not on a fee-for-service but on a salary basis where we optimize all the skills? In short, we want to know, will the doctor now be in for all the people of Ontario and not just for some of them?

I expected an announcement today. Will you confirm that there is a deal with the Ontario Medical Association and will you tell us what the details of that deal are?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): We are continuing to negotiate. I'm not aware of what he alleges to be true. My information is that we're still in negotiations and we will continue to negotiate for the best interests of the people of Ontario. We share your concern. We want to make sure that doctors and nurse practitioners are available to the public right across Ontario, not just in the urban centres. That's what we will be negotiating, to make sure our health system continues to improve and provide better service to the people of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: I want to ask the Acting Premier to re-examine his information, because we have been told that a deal has been signed. I'm going to ask you in particular here to either confirm or deny that. My fear is that we're

not going to learn about this agreement here, that we'll learn about it on the next series of television ads during the next hockey playoff game, because that's been the pattern of your government.

But the particular issue is this: Three years ago, your Premier and your Minister of Health made a lot of noise about primary care reform, how you were going to change the system, move from the status quo, move to a new primary care system where more families would have a family doctor. It didn't happen. In fact, what's happened in three years is this: We've gone from a situation where there were 100 family doctor vacancies in 68 communities to one where there are 415 family doctor vacancies in 100 communities. Even your expert, Dr McKendry, says the situation is going to get worse if you don't make some changes.

So tell us the details, please. What is in this deal? What have you signed?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The information I have is that there is no concluded agreement; negotiations continue. That's the information I have and that's what you directly asked me.

I think the record speaks for itself. We do share the concern of Ontarians; we want to see more people serviced by doctors and nurse practitioners. We set up the pilot projects for the primary care, and the record is quite clear. In 1992, the NDP government reduced entrance spaces to medical schools by 10% and reduced post-graduate training positions by 10%. This means fewer doctors are graduating now. We recognized that we inherited a mess and we're trying to negotiate to make it better.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): Acting Premier, it will be interesting to see how these negotiations come out and whether in fact we do make it better. I suspect one of the reasons this is being downplayed is because you're going to fall way short of what everyone knows is needed in terms of primary care reform.

One of the first problems you have is that it doesn't just deal with doctors and you've buried the whole issue in negotiations with the OMA. We heard today from Ontario's nurses. Over the next 10 years, we're going to be 60,000 to 90,000 nurses short. There's a crisis coming if you don't take action now. They've said the time for real change is now. That means changing the way we deliver primary care so that we can better utilize the skills of nurses and other health care professionals so we can focus on keeping people well instead of only treating them when they're ill.

Minister, your own commission developed a six-year plan to reform primary care. Your minister and your Premier keep saying: "We're not going to go down that road. It's only going to be voluntary." It may be our only way of truly sustaining public medicare. Perhaps that's why you're not interested. I think, once again, you've sold out the public on primary care reform. If I'm wrong, prove it. Table the deal. Tell us if it's been signed. If you don't have the information, get it before you go out to the

scrum, because Ontarians deserve to know whether this government has protected their interests, reformed primary care, or sold them down the river one more time.

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I mentioned before, my information is that we are continuing to negotiate with the OMA. In regard to the nurses, we agree with the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario. In fact, we helped fund their study—\$500,000—on ways to improve the condition in Ontario for nurses and with more nurses. Some of the recommendations have already been implemented. The facts speak for themselves. We've invested \$375 million to hire 12,000 new nurses. We've announced new mandatory four-year baccalaureate degrees in nursing, and we've allocated \$22.6 million in implementing new standards for nurses. We agree we want to see more nurses, and we agree with improving it.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is to the Acting Premier. We know that the work of the privacy commissioner is fundamental to our democracy. Yesterday, the privacy commissioner issued a scathing report on your government's efforts to stonewall her investigation and cover up violations of the law by someone in your government who decided, as part of your privatization schemes, to use and abuse the personal financial information of Ontario citizens. My colleague Dave Christopherson from Hamilton West urged your government to change the law immediately to give the commissioner the powers she needs to complete this investigation and get to the truth.

Today, the commissioner has written to your government urging you to fast-track these changes in a short bill rather than a long, delayed bill review process. Will you commit right now in this Legislature to bring forward the changes, the amendments, that are being urged by the privacy commissioner so that she can properly do her work and the privacy of Ontario citizens can be properly protected?

1430

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I think the Minister of Finance answered a question similar to this yesterday. We accept the Information and Privacy Commissioner's findings and we'll comply with her recommendations and will do so faster than she proposed, four months instead of six. In fact, Minister Eves indicated yesterday that four of the recommendations have already been implemented.

We fully accept the Information and Privacy Commissioner's call for a review of Ontario's privacy legislation, including the scope of the commissioner's powers. This act has not been reviewed for almost a decade, since 1991. A review is overdue, and we've committed to establish an all-party committee to undertake that.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Minister, clearly what you're trying to do is dodge the issue and deflect attention. The commissioner's letter sent to

you today as a result of yesterday's discussion in the House says in part, "While your suggestion of referring the entire act to a legislative committee for review shows the importance you are placing on the need to add powers we require to protect the privacy of Ontarians, I respectfully ask that you consider a faster route." You say you want to comply with the commissioner. She goes on to say: "I believe that enough time has been spent studying this matter. The time for action is now.... Respectfully, for the reasons I have cited in my special report, I ask that the government proceed to bring in these amendments as quickly as possible."

Very clear, and I offered up on behalf of the NDP caucus yesterday unanimous consent to fast-track legislation. In one day, we can give the commissioner the powers she needs to get to the bottom of this.

Minister, either you want to agree with the commissioner and give her the power to get to the bottom of it or this is just an Ipperwash-like stonewalling. What is it, stonewalling or getting to the truth?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The NDP's policy is quite amazing in how it's flexible and can reverse itself. Back in 1991, you rejected an all-party committee's recommendations to give this commissioner exactly the powers she's looking for right now. When the Liberals passed this legislation in 1998—

Mr Christopherson: What are you hiding?

Hon Mr Hodgson: —they chose not to grant the Information and Privacy Commissioner powers that are now being called for.

Mr Christopherson: It's a cover-up.

Hon Mr Hodgson: This is a piece of legislation which is very, very important. It has been 10 years—

The Speaker: Minister, take his seat please.

Member for Hamilton West, you have asked a question. You can't then shout at him. You asked a very forceful question. It's the minister's time.

Mr Christopherson: Ask him to answer the question for me.

The Speaker: You can't keep going on like this.

This is his last warning. If not, I'll name him and he'll have to leave.

Chair of Management Board.

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I mentioned, the NDP rejected an all-party standing committee's recommendation to give the Information and Privacy Commissioner these powers she is asking for now. It has been 10 years since this legislation was opened up and looked at. There have been changes in technology. I agree it's important that we deal with this in as fast and appropriate a manner as possible. That's why we volunteered to have an all-party committee take a look at these proposed recommendations and changes to see if we can do it in as expeditious a manner as possible, but also in a manner—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. I want to go back

to a question asked earlier by my leader, Dalton McGuinty, with regard to your role in this deal that turned less than half a million dollars into \$25 million, at your hands, benefiting your friends. You said again yesterday outside the House that the agreement was entered into a month before the briefing was requested.

Minister, you know those "facts" are incorrect. You know that the 25-foot giveaway that made your friends millionaires was done after the memo was written. The memo doesn't say "request from an MPP." It doesn't say "briefing from an MPP. It says very clearly "ministerial involvement."

Again, you've had a day now. I'm sure your political staff, the Premier's staff, the bureaucrats, have looked at this file. I find it incredible that you cannot stand in the House and tell us why this piece of property was not tendered, why any other developer was not given a shot and why your friend got special treatment. Did you look into it, Minister? Can you tell us why this property was not tendered, why the 25 feet that was given away was not up for public sale and was only available to your friend? Can you tell us, after 24 hours, the answer to that question?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I already answered that. The memo was written by an employee of the Ontario Realty Corp named Bob Budd. He has confirmed that it was in response to an inquiry from the constituents of the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. He was requesting a briefing from our office to give the information to him. The property the ORC had for sale, that purchase and sale agreement, was entered into on April 17.

I just want to remind you, though, that sometimes you're kind of loose with what is actually accurate. The property has not closed. It will go through a process to make sure it complies with the new procedures. If anything irregular is found there, it will not close and it will be referred to the police to investigate.

Mr Agostino: The minister has not answered the question. You seem to be selective. Two days ago, outside the Legislature, when asked about freezing those deals or reversing those deals, you said, "There are some deals, because the agreement has been signed, that we can't reverse." Now you're saying, "The agreement has been signed here, but we can reverse it if we don't like it." You can't have it both ways. You said that outside the House and you repeated it.

Minister, the question is very simple. We know this property was not tendered. We know it was not put up for public value. We know it was not given to anyone else to look at. It was offered strictly to your friend, your fundraiser, your buddies in the Conservative Party, the buddies of your ministers. We clearly now that.

I just want to ask you a very simple question. You've had 24 hours. Your staff has looked at it. The Premier's office has looked at it. Can you tell us clearly why this piece of property, the 25-foot addition, was not tendered?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I can tell you that the proper process is in place, where this property transaction will go to the forensic auditors and to the police. We'll get to

the bottom of these questions. That's the proper way to get evidence.

You're talking about facts, and you come into this House every week and you state that something is categorically true. Last Thursday you came into this House, you had a purchase and sale agreement on 145 Eastern and you told this House I had signed it when you knew full well—you had it in your hand—that that wasn't accurate. I had never signed that.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent for the member for Hamilton East to have an extra two minutes to explain to this House his role in advocating for and lobbying for—

The Speaker: Member take his seat. Start the clock. The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock, please. Order. Government members.

Just before we begin, I would ask all members, as I have in the past, that points of order not be raised during question period. When it starts with the government benches, as it did there, then it will start with the opposition and we'll be into time constraints. I did it because the member hasn't done a point of order and I have tried to be lenient, but I am going to crack down. I say to all members, nothing in question period can be out of order. I listen very carefully to the questions. We're not going to get into doing points of order during question period and wasting valuable time. I would appreciate it if the member would do that next time.

Now, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. Start the clock.

1440

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question is for the Minister of Education. Farmers, parents and students in my riding are very concerned over recent events regarding school calendars in tobacco country.

For years, Glendale secondary school in Tillsonburg and Norris district high school, as well as two schools in the Grand Erie District School Board, Valley Heights district secondary and Delhi district secondary, have had modified calendars to allow students to work in tobacco harvest. That tradition is now threatened.

Minister, the tobacco harvest provides approximately 4,500 jobs for young people in my area, paying those young people approximately \$16 million in wages. The average young person will make anywhere between \$3,000 and \$5,000 in just one month. Much of this money goes to post-secondary education. The Grand Erie board has now decided not to modify its calendar for a late start and has put a lot of student jobs at risk.

Some are saying this change is because the government will not allow a late start next year and that ministry rules on modified calendars are too strict.

Minister, can you explain the rationale that is used when the ministry looks at these modified calendars?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I thank the member for the question, and I very much appreciate his advice and input on this important local issue.

I think we need to be clear here. First of all, the ministry has no problem with school boards being flexible in terms of how they organize their school year based on local circumstances. If the board is saying that in the community, they're misrepresenting the situation.

Secondly, we have set a standard of 190 instructional days that students deserve to learn the new curriculum. This board is proposing to shortchange their students by two days. We don't think that's appropriate. We also believe that it is not unrealistic to expect this board to find a way to have 190 good, solid instructional days for their students in a 365-day year.

Mr Barrett: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate your response. What I and many people are concerned about is the effect this situation will have on our young people, not only students working in the harvest but students who may well end up sitting in an empty classroom until the harvest is complete.

Minister, many people in our area are asking: "How did this happen? Why can't the problem be solved?" They're concerned that thousands of student jobs may be lost permanently. People in our area want the flexibility you mentioned to deal with local concerns. Why is the government adamant that boards meet the 190-day requirement? Are there other boards in the province that modify their calendars, and do they meet this 190-day requirement?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, the reason we set the 190 days of instructional time for students is, of course, because of the demands of the new curriculum, which is going to better prepare those students for their future. We think 190 days is required to teach that curriculum.

Why this school board is having difficulty finding two days to ensure that their students get what they need, when other school boards are quite capable of managing this, I think is beyond the community and beyond the rest of us. There are other boards in this province, for example in northern Ontario, that actually break for a week during the school year because of local circumstances and they make that time up. So there is no problem with a board rearranging their school calendar to do the 190 days. This board, for whatever reason, seems to have some difficulty figuring out how to give their children two days that are required for those students to learn what they need to learn.

I'd like to close by welcoming representatives of the Durham public school board, both elected trustees and student trustees, in our gallery. Welcome.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, guns have been used in more than half of the murders com-

mitted this year in the city of Toronto. Last year the rate was under 40%, and in 1998 the figure was just 23%. Police are telling us they are encountering more firearms on Ontario streets than ever before. For the first time in this province, we are staring into the face of a gun epidemic.

We put forward a six-point plan to make our streets safer when it comes to guns. Why is it that on your watch in our province, we are experiencing a gun epidemic in Ontario, and why are you not standing up to the gun lobby in the interests of Ontario citizens?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for raising the issue of violent crime. It's a very serious issue in the province of Ontario, as I'm sure the member knows. In fact, we've had recent incidents of the use of weapons in the school system. That is a matter of great concern to all parents across the province.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): This is the last warning for the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale. If he does it again, he'll be asked to leave.

Hon Mr Flaherty: As I was saying, we have had recent incidents of violence in Ontario, including one in the Ottawa area, some of them involving weapons, sometimes knives, sometimes guns.

I spoke this morning at a safe schools conference at the King campus of Seneca College, where educators, community members and the police are all trying to address this very serious issue of violent youth crime. It would be of great assistance to the people of Ontario if the federal Liberal government would repeal the Young Offenders Act. Even under the amendments to the Young Offenders Act, as the member probably knows, a young person committing a violent crime with a weapon would not face mandatory jail.

Mr McGuinty: I hear what this minister is saying when it comes to guns in Ontario, but let me tell you what he and his government are doing. First of all, we have one of their members appearing in an NRA infomercial that's being aired in the United States of America. The NRA, just so you know, opposes all gun controls and opposes a ban on armour-piercing, cop-killing bullets. If you want to know what this government stands for, those are the kinds of things that they stand for. This government co-operated with the NRA when it came to putting into our schools a book that teaches our children how to load and shoot a gun. That's what this government stands for when it comes to gun controls in Ontario.

We have put forward a reasonable and responsible six-point plan to curb the use of guns and to make our streets safer in this province. Again, Minister, when are you going to stop acting for the gun lobby and start acting to make our streets safer in our province?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I trust that the Leader of the Opposition knows that the use of weapons in the commission of offences is against the law, against the Criminal Code, and that we have firearms legislation in

this country. The Leader of the Opposition is a lawyer and he would know that the use of replica weapons is a criminal offence in this country. I assume he knows that part of it. But I assume he also knows that we have conditional sentences as a result of the federal Liberal government's resolution in 1996, that someone can commit a violent offence in Ontario and, because of the federal Liberal amendment, it's open to the courts to impose a non-custodial term. We think that's wrong. We think that serious violent crime requires custodial sentences. I hope the Leader of the Opposition can take that message to his Liberal friends in Ottawa and get that law changed during this session of the House of Commons.

LANDFILL

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. As you are aware, the Taro landfill in my community is highly controversial and at the present time it has become a hotbed of rumour and speculation again. The catalyst for these rumours is a letter that was sent to you from Philip Services, the landfill's parent company. The landfill's community liaison committee, my neighbours and myself all believe the letter was an attempt to change the makeup of the expert panel that was appointed by your predecessor, Minister Clement. This speculation is undermining the credibility of the six-point action plan and the expert panel. Will you verify the contents of that letter, or at the very least reassure my constituents that there will be no changes to the six-point plan or the makeup of the expert panel?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I want to thank the member for Stoney Creek for the question. The makeup of the panel includes experts from varying fields of study, such as human health impact, hydrogeology, organic chemistry, water treatment, air quality and landfill design and operation, including waste processing. The panel has been tasked with the duty of providing me with recommendations regarding monitoring practices and safeguards currently in use at the Taro East landfill. In addition to the advice and recommendations that they will be providing to me, the panel is also required to report to the community liaison committee. I can tell you that on April 4 of this year I wrote to Philip enterprises stating my support for the members of the expert panel and their mandate.

Let me assure the honourable member and his constituents in Stoney Creek that there will be no changes to the composition of the panel and no changes to the six-point plan.

Mr Clark: The next most contentious issue in this landfill is the hazardous waste. The expert panel has been given wide latitude to review the operations of the landfill. Minister, as you are aware, the report of the investigations and enforcement branch of your ministry has stated that there is a high potential for hazardous waste in the landfill. The report also recommended that

proper sampling take place to identify the true composition of the waste. No other action will be acceptable to myself or my constituents. It's imperative that we get to the bottom of this and a paper chase won't do.

Will you give direction to the expert panel and authorize it to conduct proper sampling, either through deep-core drilling or excavation of the landfill site, and set the fears of my community at ease once and for all?

1450

Hon Mr Newman: Much of the work in the six-point plan has been completed or is near completion. Among other things, the expert panel will be making recommendations to me and the community liaison committee on the adequacy of existing measures used to monitor and control the impacts on human health, including air, water and soil quality.

Between November 1998 and March 31, 1999, my ministry conducted an extensive audit of the Taro East landfill. This included over 400 air, ground and surface water, landfill leachate and waste samples. No evidence of any off-site environmental impact was found.

This expert panel was designed to carry forward our commitment to determine what further steps, if any, may be necessary to ensure the protection of the environment and the local community.

I look forward to working with the member for Stoney Creek to achieve this goal. I also expect to be receiving the panel's report this summer and will review their recommendations at that time. I'm very supportive of the panel's work and look forward to reading their report.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the member's time is up.

AIR QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I wish the Minister of the Environment would answer our questions that fully.

Minister, this morning you made a big noise about new smog forecasting plans. If you want smog forecasting, I'll give you smog forecasting. Guess what? It's going up. The question is: What are you going to do about it?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): First off, I think we need hot air warnings from the member opposite. I was disappointed that she wasn't at the announcement today, because it was a very good announcement about the launch of a new Web site, www.ontarioairquality.com. This Web site comes into effect on Monday, May 1. People from across Ontario will be able to go on to the Web site and get real-time readings of smog across the province. It will be updated six times daily, Monday to Friday, and three times daily on weekends. It's a worthwhile Web site, and you're going to see the smog improve in this province.

Ms Churley: That's a pitiful answer. I enjoyed it. My mind needed a rest. That was ridiculous. Do you know what I thought he was going to bring up today? Drive Clean. Let's talk about cars for a minute.

Let's get serious here. Drive Clean is something you usually bring up. I want to remind you again that despite any efforts you may make, if you do not convert the Lakeview plant from coal to natural gas, it will be the equivalent of one million cars on the road.

Smog season is upon us. Children are going to be sick, elderly people are going to be sick and some people are going to die. You can make a difference. I'm asking you today. You've said you've been thinking about it and considering it. That's not good enough. I want you to tell us today that you will make the conversion to natural gas from coal a condition of the sale of the Lakeview plant. Will you make that commitment today?

Hon Mr Newman: I know the member opposite doesn't want to hear about Drive Clean and how we're reducing greenhouse gas emissions through Drive Clean. If I've told her once, I've told her a million times that no decision has been made with respect to the question.

We have a different policy in this government. We take our time and think before we make decisions, unlike when their party was the government.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question to the Minister of Education. I want to ask you and, through you, your colleagues on the government benches about a dereliction of duty on your part towards the safety of schoolchildren affected by toxic mould. This week—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just a minute, please. The member is asking a question. We can't have this shouting across. The minister won't be able to hear the question as well. Sorry for the interruption.

The member for Parkdale-High Park.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, as you know, this week you decided to financially penalize boards that were proactive in dealing with toxic mould. Across the province, your candidates in the election left the impression that your government was going to do something about toxic mould and about the safety of children in portables.

Minister, you know already that your government had a freeze on capital that exacerbated this problem and made it worse for children. Now the bills have come due, and what have you done? You've said to these boards that you will not pay the bills and you've left \$78 million unpaid to these boards.

I'm here to ask you, on behalf of the parents of those children, will you reverse that decision today? Will you, the Minister of Education, pay for the cost that surely is a useful and important cost for the classrooms for our kids to be taught in? Will you make sure that the boards receive their funds?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): First of all, I'd like to correct the record that the honourable member has tried to put out here as being factual, because he is wrong. The Peel members of this caucus did push very hard for supports for not only their board

but other boards that had extraordinary costs above and beyond the normal expenses that school boards are responsible for. He may think \$50 million of the taxpayers' money to help school boards is a pittance. I think that's a significant commitment. We announced that \$50 million would be available, above and beyond the billions of dollars that are available to those boards for school accommodation. We have a very clear set of criteria about how boards qualified for that, and that money has indeed gone to the Peel board and the other boards that have qualified for that additional extraordinary funding.

Mr Kennedy: You have penalized the boards that decided to protect kids. You penalized the Peel board \$12.2 million. On average, you're stealing \$1.3 million for which you left a clear impression that your government would be there. Your predecessor said money would flow to protect children. Instead, you've decided not to provide—

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): Is "stealing" parliamentary?

Mr Kennedy: I hear the member from Mississauga South, agreeing with you. It's a shame that the Peel board of education is losing the equivalent of two schools, that other boards will have to cut other programs. Minister, I want to say to you today, as the Minister of Education, you're sending a terrible message and penalizing boards that want to have safe classrooms for kids and saying that you will not be there at the end of the day to take care of things.

Your government controls all the financing, and if you're not going to come up with the money to keep kids safe, then you should stand in your place and tell these boards where they're going to get this money from, where they should cut and take away from kids, because you're leaving them hanging out to dry and you're leaving kids unprotected.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Perhaps the honourable member might want to question the record of his own government that allowed the proliferation of portables on school properties, because that is an absolutely unacceptable way to educate our children. Under the funding that is available to school boards for building new buildings, for maintaining those buildings, we are seeing a reduction of over 9% in just two years of the number of portables out there. In some communities, like mine in Durham, and in Peel, we had more portables than classrooms.

Mr Kennedy: You won't pay for that.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Who do you think is building the schools, Gerard? It's our taxpayers' money that's going to those boards. We're having the biggest school construction season we've ever seen.

The other thing I would like to remind the honourable member of is that we were very clear that there would be money available for these boards. We said up front there was going to be \$50 million on top of the many other millions they get for this, and that \$50 million is indeed—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. As you are well aware, Ontario produces some of the highest-quality wines and icewines in the world. My home riding of Niagara Falls is the heartland of Ontario's wine industry. Our wines have won award after award at both European and North American competitions. Despite these incredible successes, Ontario wines are not currently exported to most members of the European Union. Could you explain to the House why Ontario wineries are having problems exporting their fine products to Europe?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I want to thank the member for Niagara Falls for the question. I want to say too that the wine industry is very fortunate to have a representative like Mr Maves as a spokesperson and an advocate for the Ontario wine industry. He makes their case at every possible opportunity.

Indeed, he's right. There are artificial barriers in place which are virtually eliminating access for world-class Ontario products to the European Union market. We'll use just two examples. France and Italy, through LCBO outlets in this province, sell over \$200 million worth of product to Ontario residents. What do they allow into Italy and France? Fifty thousand dollars worth of product into France and absolutely nothing into Italy. This is not a level playing field, and we are committed as the government of Ontario to changing that.

Mr Maves: I agree with what you say about the fine wines of Ontario being treated unfairly by the members of the European Union. In fact, I'm not the only one. I know that many of our grape growers and wineries agree with you also. However, could you please explain to the House what you plan to do to overcome these unfair trade barriers that have been put into place?

Hon Mr Runciman: I understand very much, as well as Mr Maves understands, the frustration of the wine producers in this province. A few weeks ago Mr Palladini and I met with the ambassador for France. I know my predecessors, Ministers Tsubouchi and Sterling, have also made representations to the European Union governments to at least open up the doors a little bit to outstanding Ontario products.

It's my intention and the government's intention to put this at the top of our agenda in terms of trade relationships. We're going to be meeting with officials from the European Union, the French government and the British government within the next few weeks. As I said, this is going to be a very top priority. The federal government has put it on the back burner. The Ontario government is going to put it on the front burner and we're going to fight for a fair deal for Ontario wine producers.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a question for the Minister of Education. My question is regarding the Algoma District School Board. It's one of the three public school boards within the constituency of Algoma-Manitoulin. It is continuing to face financial crisis. There's a very real threat that schools in single-school communities will be forced to close.

Minister, you fund under your formula the Algoma District School Board as if it were a high-density school board. Your own formula says that's not correct. Your own formula states that if the student population, divided by the area, is less than one, then it is a low-density board. In Algoma, that works out to 0.2. In other words, there are 15,000 students occupying 70,534 square kilometres. Why are you not following your funding formula?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I appreciate the expression of concern on behalf of the member's constituency. First of all, this is a school board that has great geographic distances, that is in the northern community. It has specific and special needs because of that in servicing the students within its community. Financially, the funding formula does indeed recognize that. If there are any mistakes that have been made, I'd be quite happy to take a look at that and review that if that's what it takes. But this is a board that represents and deals with a northern community, and the funding formula is specifically designed to support boards that have those particular challenges.

Mr Brown: No one would agree with the minister on that account. I would ask the minister to come to Algoma and maybe go for a drive with me. We could start in Searchmont. We'd go to Heyden. We'd stop in Batchawana. We'd jaunt up to Hornepayne. We'd stop and visit the public school children in White River, slip over to Wawa, slide over to Chapleau, shoot down to Thessalon, drive along the North Shore to Spanish, up to Elliot Lake. We'd come back down on to the shore, visit Blind River, stop at Thessalon, Iron Bridge, St Joe's Island, Desbarats, Echo Bay, and finally we'd get back to Sault Ste Marie. You know, we would have covered over 2,000 kilometres on the road and we'd have spent 25 hours in the car bonding.

Minister, this is a large geographic board. Your funding formula does not take into account the needs of these communities. Minister, fix it.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I'm not quite sure if I've had an invitation to tour his riding or start a relationship. Anyway, I appreciate the seriousness with which he asked this question, because I do understand. I have been in the north on many occasions and to take the particular trip the honourable member just described would probably take us days or more, I suspect, because of the size of his riding. That is, indeed, why we do provide additional monies to boards in northern communities, for example, to recognize that. If there are any mistakes that have been made in the funding formula for this particular board, I

would be very pleased to look at any information or evidence he has and I'd be quite prepared to have staff take a look at that.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It's with regard to mail-in ballots for municipal elections.

Many permanent residents in my riding believe voters should only vote where they permanently live. It's my understanding there are people who are filling out ballots just by signing a cottage property owner's name. For instance, people who are in Florida for the winter have relatives pick up their mail and then just sign the owner's name and forward it to the municipal office. Balloting and voting should be the same for municipalities as it is for provincial and federal. Minister, would you please advise this House if you are thinking of making the requirements for voting in municipal elections similar to those of the federal and provincial elections?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): First of all, it's clear in Ontario law that you've got to reside in the municipality or you've got to be an owner or a tenant of land there, or a spouse of an owner or tenant. In a sense the law is similar because you have to qualify to vote, whether provincially or federally or municipally, in order to vote in a particular location. The way you qualify municipally is through residency, through property ownership or tenancy, or through payment of your municipal taxes.

In 1996, we passed the Municipal Elections Act in this House and we said that there could be alternative voting methods: voting machines, voting recorders, vote tabulators, or voting by mail or telephone. I agree with that act. I think it was a good act to do that.

In the fourth place, the honourable member has some concerns about voter fraud. We're concerned about that, too. There are penalties in the act. If there are any illegal practices or activities, we should get to the bottom of that, and that I think is the proper way to deal with the situation.

Mr Stewart: I believe the mail-in vote only helps cottage owners. Many cottagers have control of the townships with little regard for regular ongoing issues such as roads, garbage, agriculture issues. There are many people in my riding who want change in the way municipal voting is done. How can their concerns be addressed?

Hon Mr Clement: One of the ways that we want to help to deal with these local issues—because this is very intensive local issue, as the honourable member has said—is to have some flexibility in the act to allow the local municipality to make these kinds of decisions. In the Municipal Elections Act that we passed in 1996, we said that the decision to use alternative methods of voting lies with the individual municipalities. An individual municipality can pass a bylaw either to accept or reject alternative voting methods. If the honourable member wants to work with his local municipality to meet the

concerns of his constituents, I think that's the best way to handle that issue.

1510

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): My question is the Acting Premier, in the absence of the Minister of Health. Today the headline in the Hamilton Spectator is "Henderson Saved." Now, that's based on the words of a senior government official, not necessarily something that's on the record or that we have written confirmation of.

First of all, we would like to hear you state unequivocally that indeed the Henderson has been saved, but let me also say to you that that's only part of the equation. To give the people on the mountain relief from their concern about losing their hospital with the potential that McMaster University Hospital could close, or the General, still leaves our community very much in the air. I'm asking you today to confirm that the Henderson will stay open and that the other three acute care facilities in our community will also stay open.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): This is an important issue and we fully understand and have heard the concerns of Hamilton residents. The continued delivery of quality patient care is our government's top priority. Today a supervisor has been appointed, Ron Mulchey, CEO of Toronto East General. The supervisor will develop a strong recovery plan to meet the needs of Hamilton residents. The supervisor will work towards keeping the Henderson open as an acute-care hospital.

I'm assuming that's the good news you're referring to.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you for that, Acting Premier. It's good to hear that you're saying, "He's going to have a mandate to try and do it." All the legal words that a government needs, you've got in there. So yes, it's helpful to hear that, but what I am saying to you as clearly as I possibly can is that keeping the Henderson open but shutting down McMaster or shutting down the General, or St Joseph's, for that matter, is unacceptable. That only shifts the problem from the Hamilton Mountain residents being concerned about their medical services to people in the west end or downtown being concerned about theirs. This is only good news, Minister, if Henderson is saved, McMaster is saved and the General is saved. That's the message we need to hear; that's the announcement I need you to make. Please, Minister, tell us that Henderson, McMaster and the General are all off the chopping block and that they will be there to serve the health needs of the people of my community of Hamilton.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I will pass on the member's request to the Minister of Health. I'm sure he'll realize we don't want to have two good-news announcements today, so she'll probably be saving that for some other time.

I'm not sure how you can fearmonger over a good-news announcement like this. The ministry, the minister and this government have listened to the concerns of the residents of Hamilton. We recognize that this is an important issue, and we're taking the steps to make sure that we respond accordingly to deliver quality health care in the Hamilton region.

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question which is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food which is within the provincial jurisdiction, not the federal jurisdiction, in this case. So I'm not asking you to ask the federal government for anything.

I want to talk about the Wine Content Act today. You know the Wine Content Act was put into effect during the free trade agreement in order to give a bridging time for wineries to be able to obtain locally grown grapes. My question to you is this: First of all, would you support the grape farmers of Ontario in their bid to have those wines which are in the LCBO stores in the Canadian and Ontario sections and in other wine retail stores 100% Ontario content if they're to be marketed as Ontario wines?

Secondly, would you tell us what you intend to advocate on behalf of farmers in relation to the extension of the Wine Content Act? Are you going to extend it as it is, which allows 25% Ontario content, 75% foreign content and still allow it to be marketed as an Ontario wine?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): Thank you for the question. As it relates to the Wine Content Act, it would be better answered by the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, but I do want to assure the member opposite that as Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs I very strongly support the increased content of Ontario grapes in the making of all wines and encourage the appropriate mechanism to do that so as much as possible we can use the quality Ontario grapes that are produced in the Niagara region and increase the availability of that product to the people purchasing the wine. I think it's very important that we encourage everyone in the province who buys wine to understand that when they buy VQA, they're buying Ontario grapes. When they buy other products of Ontario, they are not necessarily Ontario product. I think it's very important that we increase that awareness to make sure that our people can buy the high-quality product that our farmers produce.

PETITIONS

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I have a petition here to the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians with a developmental disability are in growing danger of inadequate support because compensation to staff of not-for-profit agencies is, based on a recent survey, on average, 20% to 25% less than compensation for others doing the same work in provincial institutions or similar work in other settings; and

"Whereas there are hundreds of senior parents in Ontario who saved the Ontario government millions of dollars by keeping their child with a developmental disability at home, and who are still caring for their adult child; and

"Whereas there is no place for most of these adults with a developmental disability to go when the parents are no longer able to provide care; and

"Whereas these parents live with constant anxiety and despair; and

"Whereas these adult children will end up in Ontario nursing homes and hospitals if there is no appropriate place to provide care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To significantly increase compensation for workers in not-for-profit agencies so that it is comparable to the compensation of government-funded workers in identical or similar occupations; and

"To provide the resources necessary to give appropriate support to Ontarians with a developmental disability who at present have no place to go when their parents are no longer able to care for them."

I have signed that myself.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer, also called Our Father, has been used to open the proceedings of municipal chambers and the Ontario Legislative Assembly since the beginning of Upper Canada in the 18th century; and

"Whereas such use of the Lord's Prayer is part of Ontario's long-standing heritage and a tradition that continues to play a significant role in contemporary Ontario life; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is a most meaningful expression of the religious convictions of many Ontario citizens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario maintain the use of the Lord's Prayer in its proceedings, in accordance with its long-standing established custom, and do all in its power to maintain use of this prayer in municipal chambers in Ontario."

I indeed affix my signature.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reflects the previous petition just read.

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer, also called Our Father, has been used to open the proceedings of municipal chambers and the Ontario Legislative Assembly since the beginning of Upper Canada in the 18th century; and

"Whereas such use of the Lord's Prayer is part of Ontario's long-standing heritage and a tradition that continues to play a significant role in contemporary Ontario life; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is a most meaningful expression of the religious convictions of many Ontario citizens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario maintain the use of the Lord's Prayer in its proceedings, in accordance with its long-standing established custom, and do all in its power to maintain use of this prayer in municipal chambers in Ontario."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I happen to have a petition that just came in. It's stamped and approved, appropriately. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cancer patients in Ontario requiring radiation treatment face unacceptable delays and are often forced to travel to the United States to receive medical attention;

"Whereas many prescription drugs which would help patients with a variety of medical conditions such as multiple sclerosis, arthritis, diabetes and heart failure are not covered by OHIP;

"Whereas many assistive devices that could aid patients in Ontario are not eligible for funding from the Ontario Ministry of Health;

"Whereas community care access centres have inadequate funding to carry out their responsibilities for long-term and home care;

"Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge Premier Mike Harris to sell the two new turboprop luxury aircraft just purchased by this government and quietly announced just before the Easter weekend and use the money derived from the sale to meet the aforementioned health care needs."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with this petition.

1520

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government's plan to force the sale of subsidized housing in Hamilton-Wentworth will create a crisis for 700 local families; and

"Whereas in addition to these 700 families there are 3,700 other families on waiting lists who will be left without affordable accommodation; and

"Whereas the Harris government's housing sell-off is mean-spirited and targets the poorest families who are now threatened with possible eviction;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario direct the Harris government to save these affordable housing units for low-income families, and support new affordable housing to help the 3,700 families on waiting lists in our community."

I add my name to this petition.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to pass to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals into Ontario's street communities;

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I hereby affix my signature as I would hope the member for St Catharines might someday.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own community because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I have yet another 83 signatories to this petition. I affix my signature in agreement with their concerns.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside of their own communities because of lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I affix my signature, as I am in agreement with the contents of this petition signed by 28 individuals.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

Being a member from a truly far north riding, I'm proud to affix my signature to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

DIRECT DEMOCRACY THROUGH MUNICIPAL REFERENDUMS ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA DÉMOCRATIE DIRECTE PAR VOIE DE RÉFÉRENDUM MUNICIPAL

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 25, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 62, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in order to encourage direct democracy through municipal referendums, to provide additional tools to assist restructuring municipalities and to deal with other municipal matters / Projet de loi 62, Loi édictant, modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois en vue d'encourager la démocratie directe au moyen de référendums municipaux, de fournir des outils supplémentaires pour aider les municipalités restructurées et de traiter d'autres questions municipales.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Further debate? I believe the member for Hamilton West has the floor.

Applause.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Well, I thank you for that, the member for St Catharines. I won't comment on why. I don't know, but it was nice. I appreciate it. Maybe it's just because we're the only two here and there are, like, two over there.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Different names; same outlook.

Mr Christopherson: Similar outlook—I don't know about the same. We don't drink the same brand of Kool Aid that you pass around the crowd over there on that side but, yes, I would think representing a working-class, hard-working community like St Catharines, you would have similar views—should have similar views, I might say to you.

However, the issue at hand is speaking to the question of municipal restructuring, and I obviously want to focus a bit on what has happened in the new city of Hamilton, because we're mentioned in this bill, along with a number of other communities. At the outset, let me say that there's one good thing in the whole bill that I will comment on, and that is that there are an additional two seats being added for the rural municipalities that are part of the existing region, the old municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth, and will be a part of the new city. Having said that, I'm not 100% sure about the last part of what I said, which was that they'll be a part of the new city, because we've got this huge piece of land mass, a stand-alone municipality called Flamborough, that may or may not be a part of the new community.

The minister says he hasn't looked at all the numbers yet and that's why a decision hasn't been made. We, of course, believe very strongly that what is really dictating his delay in making a decision is that they don't want to make any waves before the by-election in Wentworth-Burlington. That would seem to be the game plan, simply because if they were planning to do what the people of Flamborough want, which is to split that community off into other regional communities in the surrounding area, I would think that would be a boost to their Tory candidate, who to date, unless I've missed something recent in the last few hours, has only said that she hasn't yet got a position on Flamborough.

1530

The government obviously is faced with two choices. One is to say to the candidate, "We're going to announce that Flamborough is not going anywhere, and you are going to have to defend that door to door." I think we can appreciate how appealing that might be to a candidate. Or we could just delay the whole thing; it only has to be by a few weeks. We still are, I am convinced, on the brink of calling the by-election. If you can just hang tough long enough without a decision getting out there, then arguably, from the Tory perspective and from that candidate's point of view, it may be considered easier to go door to door and spin the issue: that the minister is looking at the numbers and they haven't yet made a decision and all the other nonsense they have thrown into this. As tough as that might be, and as squirmy as that might leave the candidate, maybe that's better than saying to people at

the door, "Yes, I believe my government did the right thing by denying you what you want." That's the essence of the issue.

I also think that if they had good news in terms of what Flamborough wants, we would already have heard it, and right on the heels of that, we would have had the by-election call. In the absence of that announcement, one has to conclude that at the cabinet table they looked at the two scenarios they had—what they were going to do defending it in a by-election or defending the delay of a decision—and decided they would rather tough it out and live with criticism of delaying the process, knowing that at the end of the day, the end of the by-election, whether or not the Tory candidate won, they'd have an answer to the Flamborough residents that they wouldn't want to hear.

That is cynical enough in and of itself. But we're all politicians here, so I'm not going to pretend there aren't political discussions in the Liberal caucus and NDP caucus; of course there are.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Hamilton West is always well worth hearing, and I would have thought there would be a quorum in the House in order to do that.

The Speaker: Clerk, check for the quorum, please.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Speaker: The member for Hamilton West has the floor.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker.

Let me pick up where I left off. I have informed my counterpart, the Liberal House leader, that I will surely return a similar favour, but that is next week's business.

The issue I was referring to was the politics of what is happening, and I was about to comment that of course there are political considerations in all our caucuses when we discuss matters, none so lively as perhaps in the cabinet room where the cutting edge of government decision-making is taking place. Having been there myself, I have a pretty good sense of the kind of dynamics that happen.

However, what makes this extraordinarily unacceptable is that we've got a municipal election this November, and not just any municipal election, an election that will create the council that will govern the new city of Hamilton. We will go from individual mayors in each of those municipalities and a regional chair to one mayor. This is obviously a historic occasion for the people of Hamilton and it is totally unacceptable, I would argue, as well as unfair and undemocratic to be delaying a decision as fundamental as the one that's in front of the government. That decision, of course, is, what will the boundaries of the new city of Hamilton be? We don't know. We don't know at this point.

We've got Marvin Ryder, the chair of the transition board—and as much as I still think the makeup of that board could have reflected better the community that we

are, I have no compunction in saying that I believe the members of the transition board are doing the best they can. Does that mean I agree with every decision? No. But I do believe they are trying and have the best interests of the community at heart. But even Mr Ryder has pointed out that the delay is costing money. Money is being wasted. For a government that talks about "taxpayers" as opposed to "citizens," "bottom line" instead of "health care," and "discipline" instead of "education," we have the apparent hypocrisy of wasting money, just blowing it right out the window, to accommodate a cynical political strategy.

Further to that, we have on the horizon the possibility that the government may say: "No, Flamborough, you can't go elsewhere. You were part of the original regional municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth in 1974 and we're going to keep that intact as the boundaries for the new city of Hamilton. However, over the next couple of years we'll let you reconsider the issue or we will reconsider it. We'll allow this issue to be reopened." That would be just about as bad—not quite, but almost as bad—as splintering off one of those communities from the new city of Hamilton. I say this in large part because the interests of the citizens of Flamborough are not going to be well served by that kind of a decision.

Why? Well, if you're sitting on the new city council and you're making transportation decisions, environmental decisions, waste disposal decisions, firefighting decisions, virtually all the big-ticket items, particularly engineering and other infrastructure decisions, given the wrangling over how much money Hamilton-Wentworth region has invested in the township of Flamborough—because there has been such a battle over that—how keen does anybody really think the new council of the city of Hamilton would be to make decisions that would see millions of dollars invested in the Flamborough community if there's still the possibility one, two, three years down the road that they're going to leave? I can't see how the interests of the citizens of Flamborough are served by that.

It does happen to be one of the greatest growth areas of the region. Infrastructure decisions in terms of water lines, sewer lines and road access are expensive but important decisions to the future of that community. You know, we may not hear those arguments around the Hamilton city council chamber, but it's going to be in the back of their minds. It's only human nature, if they've got a \$5-million decision in front of them and there are options A, B and C, and one of those options has that money being spent in Flamborough, money that would have to be fought for to get back if they left and even then they might not get the full amount, if anything.

How keen are those councillors going to be to say, "Yes, of these three options, even though I think that for the broader benefit of our new city of Hamilton, the money ought to be invested there." How comfortable are they going to be making that kind of decision knowing that \$5 million could be going right out the door if they make a decision in one, two or three years to leave the new city of Hamilton?

1540

When the city of Hamilton is interacting with the province or with the GTA or the GTSB, the Greater Toronto Services Board, which has responsibility for public transportation and the transportation network for which ultimately, at the end of the day, the western connection is Hamilton—it doesn't stop at Burlington; it's the Wentworth connection. As Hamiltonians, where do we think our boundaries are and what are we fighting for? They may be very different than what Halton, Brant or any other community—Flamborough—would think. They are obviously different perspectives depending on their relationship, geographically, fiscally and philosophically, with Queen's Park and the GTSB.

When Hamilton councillors are making these decisions, are they making them based on seeing the Hamilton boundary here or there? It may sound like semantics or perhaps inside baseball, but these are crucial decisions. These transportation decisions, engineering decisions, planning decisions, waste disposal decisions and emergency services decisions are the heart and soul, the foundation, of building a community. Obviously the new city of Hamilton council wants to make the best decisions in the best interests of the entire new city. But how do you do that when you don't know whether the boundaries you have are going to be there three years down the road?

This decision should have been made a long time ago. For that matter, this should never have got to this point. First of all, I still can't understand why the citizens of Dundas and Ancaster, and to some degree Stoney Creek, although they didn't feel as strongly in terms of numbers about the decision to create one city out of the region—Dundas and Ancaster weren't given the same option that was given to Flamborough. Why was Flamborough given that option? Not because it's good government, and not because this government believes in democracy. Quite the opposite.

It was a sop to then MPP Toni Skarica. The government, in a miscalculation so huge that I find it hard to believe they made it, but obviously they did, felt that if they offered Toni this little carrot that Flamborough could make its own decision, somehow he would say: "OK, I guess I've been wrong. This really is a democratic government that is keeping its word. I guess I was wrong when I criticized them for fudging on the issue of amalgamation," and he went further than that. I can't use language that describes that in this place, but I think people understand basically what Toni's message was.

How could he possibly have accepted that deal when he was also the MPP for Dundas and Ancaster, who feel maybe not as strongly but certainly noticeably strongly about this issue? It's such a horribly miscalculated political strategy that I really am surprised it was offered. When it was rejected by Toni Skarica, which was the only obvious outcome of that kind of game plan, we were left with Toni Skarica still resigning, a by-election that is going to be called any day now for Wentworth-Burlington, and Flamborough sitting out there sort of all alone

having the right, if one wants to put it that way, to decide to customize what should happen to their community. Meanwhile, the rest of Hamilton, the new city of Hamilton, is left hostage to this indecision. And why are we being held hostage? So the government can buy some time for the by-election.

The minister stands in his place and says: "I need more time to look at all the numbers. There are a lot of numbers here and some of them conflict. I need to sift through this carefully and make sure I make the right decision." Funny how they didn't think that was necessary when they changed the election laws, the financing of elections, the labour laws, the environmental protection laws they gutted, all kinds of legislation where they didn't have any public hearings or take any time at all to reflect on anything. That's their real pattern.

Oh no, in this case they just want to take their time. It's always that way when they're pressed for a decision and won't make it: It's because they want to do it right. When that kind of pressure isn't on them, they just ram things through here. Ontarians are beginning to notice that fewer and fewer bills are actually being discussed here or anywhere because they're whipping through here so fast.

The minister says that he's got all these numbers, that it's so complex, oh my. He's staying up late at night, I'm sure, pulling his hair out trying to figure out how to work his way through this quagmire that he personally created, and yet it was OK to say to Flamborough and all the other affected municipalities, including Hamilton-Wentworth, "You've got a deadline"—I think the date the first time around was March 17, something close to that, which was then extended by a measly two weeks—"to give me all this complex, conflicting information," which the minister now says is the reason he can't make a decision.

None of it adds up or makes any sense unless you take the template of an argument off the shelf that this is about the Hamilton-Wentworth by-election. When you superimpose that on top of this situation, everything gets nice and clear.

What happened? The minister already knew that given the conditions placed on accepting Flamborough by the host municipalities, there was no way he was going to be able to meet all those conditions, and therefore his recommendation to his cabinet colleagues had to be, "No, Flamborough stays." The political battle heated up in cabinet where the damage this was going to do to their prospects in the by-election was pointed out, and next thing you know, the minister is zipping out the door of the cabinet room, bypassing the media and only coming up with a very poor, thinly veiled excuse here in the House that he had to look at the numbers some more. Nonsense. Partisan politics is ruling the day. The absolute shame of it is that it's affecting in a very serious way the election of a new council for a brand new city.

One of the other things that is in this bill, or isn't in this bill actually, that affects Hamilton-Wentworth directly is the request by Hamilton, specifically led by Alder-

man Tom Jackson and supported by Mayor Morrow, that there be one other seat in addition to the two for the rural, which I was very supportive of and criticized the report when it came out, saying that there was not enough balance here in terms of the city of Hamilton because we're 70% of the population, not enough representation from the rural areas to give the new council the best chance of having the credibility and the proper makeup of different voices from different parts of the new city for it to be successful. They did that and I've given them the credit for it.

But the other piece of it was Alderman Jackson's and Mayor Morrow's contention, rightfully so, that because of the population on the south mountain and the numbers of people who will be moving into those areas over the next while, there's a disproportionate representation, meaning that the individuals who live on the south mountain, by virtue of their numbers, don't have the same representation as the rest of the city of Hamilton.

So the request was that in addition to the two rural seats, there also be a further Hamilton seat to reflect and respect the numbers of citizens who live on Hamilton Mountain. Unfortunately, that argument didn't go anywhere and it would be most appropriate for the minister still at this late date to recognize that oversight and move an amendment that would ensure Hamilton has the kind of balance on its new council that it needs to be successful.

1550

The last thing I want to point out while I'm on my feet, Speaker, and I have less than two minutes, is the fact that the Henry VIII clause is being removed. This didn't get as much attention as it should have, and there's an obvious reason why the government pulled back, so they could stand up and say: "Why are you even raising it as an issue? We've pulled back." I think it's important to point out where this government's mindset is in terms of democracy. Again, it sounds like inside baseball, but I'll tell you this is crucial.

This government put as part of their legislation creating the new supercities, if you will, the new merged cities, a clause that said that a regulation from that law had the power to override not only any other regulation in any other law, but override any other law in order to give effect to this law—terrifying kinds of power, a further concentration. If I had time, I could talk about how this government has already concentrated incredible power into regulations, and regulations are made in the cabinet rooms behind closed doors, as opposed to here on the floor of the Legislature where we can debate it and people can watch it on their own TV or see it, hear about it or read about it through the media reporting.

A clause like this surely would have been challenged constitutionally. I can't imagine a Supreme Court of Canada saying that this is acceptable. Obviously, the word got to this government. They had to pull this back or they'd have a major tiger by the tail. But the story here is that it fits with the mindset of a government that believes whatever they want to do is OK, whatever that

is. That's why we called it the Henry VIII clause, because of that mentality.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to address the House on this issue.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It was certainly a worthwhile exercise listening to my colleague from Hamilton West. I think he made some interesting points in terms of the contradiction about giving people a voice, yet we see the political manipulation in Flamborough, where they're not following through with their promise to give people in Flamborough a voice.

The one comment I found interesting that the member made was in reference to the Henry VIII clause. Certainly the blatant Henry VIII clauses in there basically saying that the minister had power above the law have been taken out, but I should inform my honourable colleague from Hamilton that they have left three other clauses, which are what I call sons of Henry VIII, in there. The clauses are still in Bill 62, and these clauses read as follows about three or four times in the bill. It says, "In the event of a conflict between a regulation made under" this act and a provision of this act or of another act or regulation made under an act, "the regulation" made under this act "prevails."

In other words, the minister by regulation, without this Legislature, can supersede anything this Legislature has passed. That power behind closed doors, which is by definition no different than the Henry VIII clause, still exists in this Bill 62. So Henry VIII is alive and well in Bill 62, and on four different occasions the Henry VIII clause has been repeated in another form in Bill 62. So democracy is still thwarted in a bill that pretends to be about democracy. The Henry VIII clause is repeated there four more times, so it's still there.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I thought the member's contribution to the debate was a very positive one, and he brought to our attention some of the deficiencies that exist in this bill. He recognizes, quite obviously, that what the bill does in effect is allow the provincial government, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, to dictate the wording of any referendum in Ontario. In other words, if a local municipality or the people within a local municipality want a question placed on the ballot that they believe to be valid, it impacts upon the community, they're not allowed to do so if the Minister of Municipal Affairs says it doesn't fit the criteria.

There are times when municipalities do want to get an opinion on something the provincial government has done, for instance, on downloading. But the member for Hamilton West will recall when this same government would not allow the municipalities to put information on the tax bill explaining why the tax bill had increased. That was when they had passed one of their nine bills on assessment. For instance, instead of proceeding with this bill, which is so flawed and needs a lot of amendments, one would have thought the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Treasurer would try to rectify the situation for cultural clubs in our communities, which are now

being assessed at a commercial rate. I must say that the member for Hamilton West probably recognizes this and with the confined time he had in his remarks was unable to get to the point, and perhaps in Oakville we have the same thing happening. There are cultural clubs, ethnic clubs in the community, that used to be designated as residential for assessment purposes that are now designated as commercial. One simple move has to be made by this provincial government: Simply issue an interpretative memorandum reverting to the way it was before, and the problem is solved; the municipalities don't have to do anything about it.

The Speaker: Further questions and comments? Seeing none, to reply, the member for Hamilton West.

Mr Christopherson: I thank the contributions of the members from Eglinton-Lawrence and St Catharines.

Specifically, I'd like to just address the issue of the referendum. I didn't spend too much time on that because obviously local issues will dictate that my time be focused on that since my community is mentioned in this bill. You hear this government talk about referendum, and they talk about it like it's the one simple solution to how democracy ought to be in the new millennium, and they put forward the bumper-sticker slogan arguments about it. But at the end of the day, it's interesting that they have created a framework for municipal referendums which, first of all, as my friend from St Catharines points out, doesn't even allow municipalities the autonomy to decide their own question in their own election to their own citizens. No, no. Big Brother Mike Harris will be the one to tell municipalities what can and can't be put on a referendum ballot, totally dispelling their argument that they believe that government closest to the people is the best. Nonsense. Control, control, control.

Further to that, you've made the threshold so high as to make the likelihood of any referendum actually being binding almost impossible. The turnout has to be 50% and then the vote has to be 50% plus one. Well, let's just take a look at the city of Toronto in their last election when they were electing their new mayor, a hugely contested election. They had a turnout in 1997 of 45.6%. Had they had a referendum on there, under Mike Harris's law it wouldn't have counted. The truth is always in the details.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'd like to inform the House that I'm going to be sharing my time with the member for Niagara Falls.

It's always a pleasure to speak to the House when it's so crowded and everybody is here. I'm glad the media were able to make it back from the Tom Long announcement to hear my speech. I am very glad to hear that—

Mr Bradley: Both galleries are full.

Mr Arnott: Yes, I see that. I'm glad you're here, member for St Catharines, to hear my speech. I'm glad to have this opportunity to speak about Bill 62, the government's municipal affairs bill, on behalf of my constituents in Waterloo-Wellington.

At the outset, I want to commend my friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on the sterling job he has done in recent months. You will recall that last fall the minister was asked to do double duty within the government as Minister of the Environment and interim Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—a considerable challenge to say the least. I think most of us in this House expected that arrangement to be very temporary. But as it turned out, this dual and daunting responsibility lasted several months, until early March, when he was relieved of the environment job and installed as the permanent Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The minister has, throughout this time, confronted his responsibilities with a good degree of dedication, addressing the issues he has faced with the public's interest foremost on his mind. In addition to his heavy legislative responsibilities, he still found time to reform the Reform Party of Canada, which in and of itself is another considerable undertaking.

1600

This Bill 62 has the minister's signature on it in many ways, in particular, his ideas about the need to advance the cause of direct democracy and to advance the populist notion that a reduction in the number of elected positions in government, to show we're serious when we talk about smaller government, is a desirable thing.

In 1995 I served as chairman of the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, a job I enjoyed very much, before I became the parliamentary assistant. In those heady early days of our government, when the revolutionary zeal was still at its zenith and everything seemed possible, our committee was assigned the task of exploring the issue of referendums, with an obligation to report back to the House on how we could expand the use of referendums in Ontario.

This minister at that time served as the government's point man during the hearings we conducted and made it very clear that his position was that more had to be done to involve Ontario's voters in the decision-making processes of government.

As chairman of this committee, I was unable to participate in the debates which ensued. While I had reservations about binding referendums in a general sense—I know the minister will recall that—I agreed and continue to agree that we need to continue to challenge the electorate to take a greater interest in political discourse, the work that we do here, and that we need to provide mechanisms whereby informed public involvement is invited. If we're successful in this, government will be more accountable and responsive, and ultimately more likely to succeed in improving the lives of Ontario's families, which surely must be the goal of every member in this House.

This bill, whose short title is the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, is intended to make local government more responsive and accountable to the electorate, and is well-intentioned in its scope and goals. As such, I support it in principle, I support its general thrust, and I intend to vote in support of the bill at second reading.

Through this bill we're creating binding municipal referendum legislation. There are a number of rules that are going to be set down according to which municipalities will have referendums if they choose to. There will be rules concerning how questions are placed on the ballot. There will be rules established as to what the nature of the questions can be. Of course, we want to make sure that municipalities have referendums on issues that fall under their jurisdiction. We'll have rules to make sure that the language is clear and concise, that the language is unbiased, and that there will be a process of appeal, if the question is inappropriate, to the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario. Of course the opposition is saying that it's the minister who's going to write the question, which is quite inaccurate.

We establish a definition of what is a binding referendum. If there's a significant turnout—a more than 50% turnout at the polls for a referendum—assuming that the rules are followed, the question and the response from the electorate would be binding upon the council. There are rules governing the registration of the question and rules governing the campaign that would ensue when one of these questions is put to the electorate.

The other significant part of the bill I want to make reference to this afternoon is the changes it proposes to the Regional Municipality of Waterloo Act, significant changes undertaken at the request of regional council last year.

Since June 3 of last year, it's been my great privilege to represent a big part of Waterloo region in this House, including the townships of Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich and the southwestern part of the city of Kitchener, including the urban neighbourhoods of Laurentian Hills, Country Hills, Brigadoon and Pioneer Park. While redistribution and the downsizing of the House from 130 to 103 MPPs has represented a challenge, I think, to most of us in this Legislature, it has been a pleasure for me to get to know the new parts of my riding and the people who live in it.

The issue of regional government reform in Waterloo goes back many years, predating my time as one of the members of the Waterloo caucus. In recent months, challenged by the government to reduce duplication of effort and the cost of municipal government in Waterloo region—a challenge which, incidentally, has been extended to local governments across the province—there has been a great flurry of activity in an attempt to build a consensus around the model of local government that Waterloo region requires for the new millennium.

Our local elected municipal councillors deserve credit for their persistent efforts to advance the local government reform agenda. Leaders such as Regional Chair Ken Seiling, mayors Carl Zehr of Kitchener, Frank Friedmann of Wellesley township, Wayne Roth of Wilmot township and Bill Strauss of Woolwich township, supported by most of their councillors, all have been steadfast in their efforts towards positive change. Their goal has been to ensure that our region is in a strong position to capitalize on the opportunities of the new century, particularly in

terms of economic development, as our area continues to emerge as one of the dominant high-technology clusters in Canada, if not yet the world. I want to thank them for their good work.

There will be some in Waterloo region who will say that this bill doesn't go far enough, that a special adviser should have been appointed early in the new year to force a change in the structure of our local government. To them, I say that Bill 62 represents real progress towards a more streamlined, efficient, effective and accountable structure, which can be implemented with certainty and which will serve our area well.

This does not suggest or even imply that further reforms to regional government in Waterloo region cannot take place in the next few years. Indeed, the minister has challenged our local councillors to renew their efforts in this regard, and as the MPP for Waterloo-Wellington, I want to be helpful in this ongoing assignment. I intend to work to ensure that the provincial government continues to work co-operatively with our local governments which, of course, is the level of government closest to the people and administers and delivers important services to ensure that Waterloo region is well prepared for the boundless opportunities of the future as we build our communities for the generations to come.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's a pleasure for me today to rise and join the debate on Bill 62. I'm going to direct most of my comments to the referendum portion of the bill.

I've listened to members on the opposite side of the House, so far in this debate, quite often talk about previous referendums, most notably, of course, the referendum on the amalgamation of the city of Toronto, when we moved the six cities into one. I've heard the members opposite, actually for quite some time now, not just during this debate but over the last few years, go on at length about how shocking it was that government didn't pay attention to that referendum result.

Now I hear the members opposite, as several years have gone by, stand up and say, "You didn't pay attention and 76% voted against it," and so on and so forth. Anyone listening at home and not really recalling the events at the time, might be—I don't want to say the words "be misled"—might wonder: "I wonder what happened way back then. I wonder how that came about."

I went back and looked up a couple of articles, because if I remember correctly, at the time there were ballots that were found in dumpsters around the city prior to the ballot; there were ballots found en masse in apartment buildings, which anyone could just pick up, take home, fill out and send in; there were ballots being sent to children that they could send in; and there were ballots being sent to people from out of the voting area.

I also remember a few problems with that referendum, in that I think the six mayors got together and sat down in a room and came up with ballot questions. Not all ended up being the same, but they weren't really clear and concise questions. If I recall correctly, the cities, once

they came up with the referendum question, actually spent taxpayers' money in an effort to get the vote that they wanted on the referendum, not, of course, financing the other side. Obviously, it skewed results. It's a terrible way of doing business. I think we're trying to legitimize the process a little bit with this bill.

As I said, I didn't want to just go by my recollection. I went back and did a little bit of research, and I pulled out a few articles from back in February 1997 and a little bit afterwards to see if my memory was correct. One of the articles is from the Toronto Sun:

"Four young brothers got ballots in the mail this week asking them to vote in Toronto's referendum on amalgamation City of Toronto employee Tom Lenathen said four of his five boys—aged seven to 14—all received ballots in the mail. 'How much faith can you put in this?'" There is a clear example, and my memory was pretty good there, I think.

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Another example was that of a retired Stoney Creek couple who have never lived in the city of Toronto and who received ballots. When asked about this, the lady said: "'If Jack and I can vote in Toronto this is really, really sick,' she said. 'Why should people pay attention to the results?'"

Councillor Tom Jakobek, who we see today is going to leave city politics—I am dismayed about that. He was excellent at what he did and I think the city of Toronto and the province in general are not going to be well served by his exit from politics. The hospital that I understand he is going to work at will be well served, but the city of Toronto and, by extension, the province of Ontario are not well served by his exit. I really wanted to see him remain in politics.

At the time, "Councillor Tom Jakobek said he'll demand an investigation into the way the city has conducted the balloting. 'Not only is it not legally binding, but it isn't even being done properly,' he said." He's got several quotes in other articles.

Here's another quote: "I just hope the sham and discreditation they're doing to it doesn't contaminate the public's mood for legitimate referendum in the future."

Another article that I went back and looked at came out of the Toronto Sun on February 21, 1997. "If ever an electoral campaign was tailor-made for practising that old piece of ballot-box stuffing advice to 'vote early and vote often,' Metro's amalgamation referendum would seem to be it. In Scarborough, for example, people can clip a so-called ballot out of a community newspaper and send it in to the civic administration building to be counted along with those the municipality sent out to local residents, whether or not they were legally qualified to vote...."

"Then there's the Toronto mail-in ballot, which has come in for considerable criticism this week because ineligible kids and non-residents have been extended the franchise via Canada Post."

The Sun said it was a scandal and a disgrace, and they were right. That's why, if you go back and you look at

the times, you look at the context, you look at how the whole thing was conducted, you can see why people were less than anxious to embrace that referendum result, unless of course you were one of those people, a No voter and a municipal politician at the time, who openly campaigned and agreed to spend taxpayers' money to support their preferred side of that referendum question.

I went back to March 4, 1997, and looked at some articles to see what were some of the comments afterwards. "Metro Chairman Alan Tonks says the megacity referendum results are not an accurate reflection of public opinion because the voting process was skewed to produce a No vote. 'To conclude that it's people overwhelmingly opposed to the unified city would be an exaggeration of interpretation.'"

It goes on, "He noted that ballots were sent to voters along with literature urging them to vote No, but there was no campaign to muster supporters of a unified city or sell the public on the advantages of the plan."

There is former Metro Chairman Alan Tonks, who watched this process and who said afterwards, "This is a sham." He gave a good reason why it was a sham—getting ballots and, along with a ballot, getting literature from the people who are conducting the ballot telling you which way to vote. That, I might say, is something that with this legislation we're bringing in can't happen any more, and that is vitally important.

There were also no spending limits on referendums in the past, and now this bill brings in spending limits. It makes it a little bit more legitimate. When referendums, Yes and No campaigns, get out there on referendum questions with a spending limit, you have a little bit more legitimate system.

It also says that a city that puts a question on a ballot cannot spend taxpayers' money to campaign in that referendum campaign for whatever side the current municipal politicians decide they want to support. I think that's vital. As Chairman Tonks pointed out clearly, and the record shows, that did happen in that 1997 Toronto amalgamation. This bill is going to stop that, and I very much applaud that.

I found another article. Toronto's city clerk, Syd Baxter, complained about the process afterwards, saying, for instance, that 9,000 residents in the city's ward 12 did not receive their ballots. An extensive investigation was "inconclusive" and failed to determine, quite frankly, where the ballots ended up. They could have ended up anywhere—mailed in, counted. Who knows who marked them; who knows how they were marked.

Another article: Tom Jakobek produced 500 referendum ballots which he said were discarded in city apartment building mailrooms. That's prior to the referendum happening. A councillor was able to come up with 500 ballots himself. So I'm sure if those who were out in force on one side of the issue were really out trying to grab a bunch of ballots, they could have done better than Mr Jakobek's 500.

I remember at the time hearing about the North York system of voting, where people would all get PINs. It

seemed pretty secure to me. All the residents get a PIN, and you phone in your vote. You give your PIN, and you register your vote. I thought that was a good system. I didn't see how there could be a problem with that. It ended up that one Toronto Sun columnist at the time just went around and asked people for their PINs. He said, "I was able in about an hour to come up with 10 PINs and vote 10 times any way I wanted."

So the reasons why someone wouldn't endorse that as a legitimate referendum result are clear, and many of those things that were problems with that referendum result are addressed by this bill. I'm very happy that the minister has done that. He has said that the bill says that now the question has to go through the chief electoral officer, which is vitally important; it must be a clear, concise question; it must be a question that has a yes-or-no answer, which is vitally important.

We've been through referendums in Quebec where the questions were bizarre questions, not yes-or-no questions on separation. The question they ask in Quebec has never been that straightforward. Of course the rest of the world, the rest of Canada, has sat on the edge of their seats during these referendums, thinking that the referendum was on separation, yes or no, but in neither referendum was it a yes-or-no question. That is, again, also addressed in this bill, something that I think is vital.

I'll reiterate. When a city puts a ballot question on there, they can't go out with taxpayers' money and campaign in support of the result they want. There are limits on spending money by either side. I think that's vitally important. We've had that for many years when we have provincial, federal and municipal elections, and of course that should be something that we look after when we're having referendums. So it's a good piece of legislation.

You've heard from other members a lot more on the bill. I know Ms Lankin in particular supports the part of Moosonee, which I support, and I appreciate her support of that part of the legislation. I rise today to talk about the past. As I said at the outset, people may have been sitting at home wondering why the government wouldn't have paid attention to that referendum result. I wanted to remind them of what really happened back then. I want to congratulate the minister on some of the changes he brought forward in the bill that are going to address a lot of the problems we back in 1997.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Colle: I know it's very fashionable in this House for the government members to beat up and bash Toronto, and it seems to be fair game. I just want to set the record straight, though, that it was this government that was admonished by the former Speaker for spending \$360,000 of taxpayers' money on promoting the amalgamation of the city of Toronto. The Minister of Municipal Affairs was found in contempt of the House for doing that. Some \$360,000 was spent.

The second thing is that the member quoted from newspapers that were all pro-amalgamation. He didn't quote from the small newspapers that were for the people

on this issue. He also quoted politicians who were in the minority of being for amalgamation. In fact, he quoted one politician who was being paid by the government to push amalgamation. He was a member of the transition team. He was on the government payroll. What else was he going to do but say that the people were wrong?

But the people in Toronto, despite this government's attempts to muzzle them, got up from the grassroots and organized referendum questions in the six city halls. They did it despite this government's thousands of dollars being spent to try to stop them and suppress them. I think they should be given credit for participating in this process.

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If the member is talking about legitimate elections, in the last provincial election the chief electoral officer said there was sabotage during the provincial election. Are they going to recognize that election that took place provincially when the chief electoral officer said there were cases of sabotage that were rampant in the province during the election process? They accepted that because they liked the final result.

But in Toronto they didn't like the fact that people spoke out and said they didn't want the megacity. They didn't like the result, so they went ahead and attacked the people of Toronto for not doing as they were told by this government, because they had the guts to stand up to the government and say, "We want to protect our communities and at least have the right to express ourselves." That's all they did. Sure, it wasn't a perfect election and process, because it was done in a hurry and this government tried to block it at every opportunity. But I say to the people of Toronto, you did the right thing. You expressed yourselves, and you should continue to speak out and not be afraid of these bullies.

Mr Christopherson: It's so typically ironic during a debate where the government members are proudly standing up and boasting about how they feel this bill is all about democracy that right in the midst of one of those little chants about democracy what do we get tabled? Time allocation motions. One of them allows a whole day of hearings; the other one, none.

Let me point out that this is becoming a pattern of this government. The House leader tries to cut a quick deal that the opposition can't possibly accept, and then the next thing you know there are one, two or three different options tabled with the clerks that then have the effect of putting a threat over the opposition, "If you don't agree with the little piece of the loaf that we've offered you over here, then these motions would have the effect of taking all of the bread off the table." In fact, one might allow a few crumbs to be left, but there will always be another one that even takes away the crumbs of democracy.

Many of us, certainly in the NDP caucus, have maintained that this government talk, talk, talks democracy, progressiveness, fairness and equity, and yet all of their actions are the opposite, opposite, opposite. Here is the best example you could possibly see—you couldn't

orchestrate this better—where one of the members of the government stands up and talks about democracy, democracy, democracy, while one of his colleagues quietly tables the end of democracy by saying: "You're finished talking. We're going to do what we want."

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I want to commend the members for Waterloo-Wellington and Niagara Falls for their comments today.

I want to touch on what the member for Niagara Falls talked about, and that was the ballot system that was used in the former cities in the new city of Toronto. I can tell you that in Scarborough the ballots were distributed through a local newspaper, the Scarborough Mirror, and they were distributed three ballots per household. It didn't matter how many people lived in the house, how many people were of voting age, if they were even eligible to vote in a municipal, provincial or federal election, it was three ballots per household.

The interesting thing about the distribution of these ballots is that the Scarborough Mirror is only delivered to houses in Scarborough. In other words, the people who lived in condominiums and apartments in Scarborough at first were cut out of the process, totally left out and had no opportunity. But the thing that I despised about that ballot more than anything was the fact that individuals had to actually sign their names on the ballots to be counted. Can you imagine that in Canada, having to sign your name on a ballot? Ballots should be secret. No one should know how anyone else votes. That's something that I was opposed to in 1996 when this was brought forward, and it's something that I am opposed to today, anything involving signing ballots, whether it's in the workplace or in any sort of election.

I also didn't like the idea that the city of Scarborough was funding one side of the issue. They chose to fund groups who were anti-amalgamation and left out individuals who were in favour of amalgamation. These are taxpayers as well and they were left out of the process.

The NDP today talks about democracy. In 1994 a referendum question was put forward by the city of Toronto with respect to doing away with the Metro level of government, and they didn't listen to the people then.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): To follow my colleague from Scarborough, I think he forgot that our wonderful mayor, Frank Faubert, who was a great mayor, tried his best to meet with the minister in order for us to participate. What did you do but shut him up, and they were unable to participate in any way. This is the same government that is bringing forward democracy, openness to the people and allowing the municipalities to participate. But here was a respected mayor saying, "Our people would like to participate," and what they did was shut him down. This is the same government that, when all the citizens were saying, "We would like to express our views," said to them: "No, we will tell you. We will amalgamate you all without any questions and without any directions." They just came down with this kind of hammer, no matter how they protested and no matter what kind of referendum they put in.

I will get an opportunity to speak later on, but I'm so disappointed that the minister who is now in place, a person I respect a lot, is bringing forward a referendum bill about direct democracy but there is no direct democracy. "Direct democracy" comes out of the mouth of the minister, and then he says to the municipalities, "You do it or else." Is that democracy? Is that the democracy of Scarborough, when our Scarborough member stands up and talks about how he remembers putting all this into the Scarborough Mirror? I'm not concerned about the Scarborough Mirror. I'm concerned about individuals in the Scarborough area who want to participate in the democratic process and who have been shut down and denied the opportunity to participate and be involved in the democratic process.

I want to say to the member from Scarborough that I know you're quite busy as a minister and all that, but when you go back, ask those people if they were given those opportunities, or were they denied by this government, by your government? They will tell you something completely different than what you said today.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Maves: I will respond first to the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. He made the statement that he endorses all the things regardless of which paper wrote about him and who complained about him. They happened. The fact of the matter is that all those things happened. What the Minister of the Environment is talking about happened. I don't know how anyone can endorse that and say it's OK.

Quite clearly, I have not taken shots at the city of Toronto. In fact, I lament on behalf of the city of Toronto that they are losing one of their brightest councillors today.

The member opposite also gave everyone credit for getting up and voting, and I do too. Everyone should get up and exercise their right to vote. But please, do it once. That's the gist of my comments. It wasn't everyone who did it over and over again, but there were many who did. My comments today were about, yes, get up and express yourself, exercise your right to vote, but do it once.

He also said that he thought we didn't like the fact that people express themselves. This bill not only gives people the right to express themselves in a referendum, but makes it possible that the referendum can actually be binding on a municipality. That has never been there before. That is something new, and gives a great deal more support to those who do get up and express themselves and who do go out and vote.

The member opposite from Hamilton complained again about getting a time allocation motion. I note to him that when his party was in office from 1990 to 1995, they were known as the kings and queens of time allocation. For those at home, what happens here is that the three parties try to agree to a timetable. If they can't and people don't want the vote to go forward, eventually the government has no choice than to move on to other business.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): As I rise to make my comments on Bill 62, let me say that I have been waiting for almost five years and am totally disappointed with Bill 62, introduced by the government, which is An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in order to encourage—I would say discourage—direct democracy through municipal referendums, to provide additional tools to assist restructuring. The bill as it is takes away more tools, rights and powers from the people and from local municipalities.

1630

I have here a document with respect to referendums, *Your Ontario, Your Choice*, put out by the PC government elected in 1995. This came out in August 1996. I haven't heard the Premier or anyone from the government side address this document. To be kind to the Premier and the government, this is a total flip-flop. What is in the bill today is a total divestment of this. It does not speak one word about giving a voice or giving power to individuals, groups, agencies or organizations in Ontario when it comes to referenda. There is zilch, nothing whatsoever.

The only people who maybe can do that, if they are being nice, are local municipalities or the government. How about that for democracy, Madam Speaker?

While I am addressing the matter, we are being told that our time to speak on this very important issue, on this flawed bill, is being curtailed as well. Again, this is part of the democratic process according to the gospel of Mike Harris. They cut the debate when they don't like what the opposition has to say. They cut the debate when groups, organizations and individuals attack the government. They cut the debate to practically nil.

The amendments that are being proposed in Bill 62 really discourage participation by the people of Ontario. They provide fewer tools and opportunities to approach the elected people, the government that represents them, to do their will. I believe that democracy works when the governing majority gives the minority an opportunity to be heard and then listens to it. Only then will democracy be alive, working well and serving the people of Ontario.

What we have seen in the last five years is a total travesty. It's a total reversal of what they said then and what they are planning to do now with the introduction of Bill 62. I have to read a couple of lines from this document produced for the government of Mike Harris in August 1996. It says, "*Your Ontario, Your Choice*." I'm saying to Mike Harris: "If you want to give them a choice, give them the opportunity to choose. With this document, you are not giving the people of Ontario any choice."

One of the comments here is, "We're looking at the possibility of government-initiated, opposition-initiated and citizen-initiated referendums." Premier, I dare you to tell the people of Ontario and this House where in Bill 62 you are giving the opportunity you talk about in this document. You are mum when it comes to giving citizens an opportunity to be heard through referendums.

"We also feel—unlike other politicians—that referendums are a good idea and do not limit the ability to

manage a government. We don't think it is unreasonable for people to have those alternatives." I would agree if they had that opportunity, that alternative. But again, in this document Mr Harris and his government are not giving the people any choice or any alternative. I have to say, "Shame on Harris and shame on his government."

A very nice quote from this document—of course this was in 1996, and we are now in another century: "What makes direct democracy so important, particularly now?"—back in 1996, not now—"Many people tell us they feel disenfranchised by the process of modern government. Many don't believe government can work for them. The manner in which important public policy issues are decided often appears to be dominated by special interest groups"—oh, yes, special interest groups—"that seem to enjoy preferred access to the media. Moreover, the gap between those with power and those without seems to be widening."

I have to agree wholeheartedly with the Premier on this quote from 1996. That gap between the people and the Premier and the politicians with the power has been widening and widening. The people have no power when, on an important document such as this one, we are being cut as we deal with the issues.

He goes on to say, "Some suggest that this vicious circle eventually leads to a divided society composed of actors and spectators." Isn't that nice? Who would be the actors and who would be the spectators here? It's fascinating that they provided a document we managed to hang on to, and it has come back to haunt them. "Those who make public policy, and those who watch it being made"—isn't that nice? "The new environment of 'ins' and 'outs' has the potential to create a frustrated, mutually hostile, and often polarized society." Again, I congratulate the Premier for polarizing the people of Ontario in exactly this way.

I have to go back a bit more, to August 13, 1990: "No constitutional reform should be imposed on the people of Ontario unless they have first had the opportunity to pass judgment on it through a binding province-wide referendum. Only if approved by such a referendum should any amendment resolution be presented to the Legislature." This was Mike Harris on August 13, 1990.

There is nothing in this silly piece of legislation presented by the government that speaks directly to the people of Ontario. I say it's a sham.

"So must be the question of responsibility," he goes on. "Some have negatively suggested that the referendum mechanism is an abrogation of a government's responsibility to govern." I have to agree with that as well. "This Ontario government believes otherwise. Our concept of governing arises from a strong belief in individual choice"—there are no individual choices if Mr Harris and his government pass this piece of legislation as it is; there are no choices for the individual—"collective stewardship, and distributed responsibility for the future. In other words, we believe that individuals should decide their futures." I challenge any member of the government and I challenge Mike Harris, the Premier, to find in this

document that he has introduced—and he has cut debate to 10 minutes each today, and only for today—where he is giving individuals the right, the possibility, to decide their future. It's not in this document.

1640

Enough of this, because I want to add something of my own. This is a document I have kept since it came out in 1996. It was done when they were thinking of introducing a referendum. Why would they be thinking of introducing a referendum? I would have supposed, on some important issues where, being politicians, maybe they were too hesitant to use a sledgehammer, so they said, "Let's have a referendum." But in a way I would say they were smart. They said: "Let's put it on paper. Let's do our homework—our dirty homework—and then we'll come back to it when the time is right." My goodness, isn't it nice that as soon as Mike Harris took government, he slashed and burned every sector in Ontario: school boards, hospital closings, imposing penalties on seniors, increasing taxes in a number of ways. He has done all of that. Now he comes back and says: "You know what? I will even take away your right to complain about something that really bothers you." It may be, as we heard before, the environment, municipal taxes, seniors and pensioners, double-billing or even garbage disposal, whatever—anything that would make the people say, "I want to do something about it; I want to speak up." Their right has been taken away here.

The Premier and the ministers have amassed all kinds of responsibilities and power for themselves and they can pass those responsibilities to whomever they want on behalf of the government, without a single citizen having the opportunity to say: "I think it's wrong. I'd like to have a say." If you really want to talk about democracy, then you have to give those people an opportunity to be heard, and once you hear them, you have to abide by that majority because they have spoken. But we have seen, under the Mike Harris government, where the majority stands. It doesn't stand anywhere. Last year the six or seven municipalities now forming Metropolitan Toronto said: "Premier, we don't want 1700 slot machines at horse racing track at Woodbine. We don't want it." Not only was it against their zoning bylaws—so what did Harris and his government do? They said, "To heck with you; we're just going to give it to them," and that's what they did.

You know what? Again, using the back-door type of policy, having no regard for people's concerns—families, poor people, seniors, whatever—now they are talking about even allowing gaming tables. Can you imagine that?

It has been said, but it's worth repeating: 78% of the people in Toronto said: "Look, not only do we not want amalgamation here in Toronto; we don't want the way you're doing it. So stop, take your time, and let's do it right." What did Harris do to the long gone and beloved former Minister Leach? They shoved it down their throats the way they wanted. I have to tell you that not too many people are very happy with the way the amalgamation has been done and is working now.

In California back in the fall of 1996, I believe, which I think is the mecca of referendums, they had some 15 referendums on the ballot in that particular year. Those were all kinds of varied questions. They were not curtailed by the higher power, by the state, as to what they could ask. Even though they had all kinds of referendums, at least they had the freedom, the choice to put on the ballot whatever they felt was important for their community, for their municipality.

With this bill, the way it is presented, we don't have a choice. With Bill 62, the people of Ontario don't have a choice. Why don't they have a choice? First of all, they haven't got the right to ask for a referendum. Second, it's only up to the province. The Premier, the cabinet, the minister, or whoever they want to appoint, will have the final say. I don't want to pick on the Premier needlessly, but let me say this. If it's going to go through, it's going to go through, no fuss or mess. Let's be realistic here. Mr Harris has the majority, and if he wants to do it, he's going to do it, and we can holler all we want. I can make my sore throat even worse than it is now.

But the question is this: On such a very important issue, we can't say that the question has to be so clear, so concise, that the answer can only be a yes or no. Is that common sense? I beg not. What kind of question can we ask the public that would get us a yes or no? That is very unfair.

A piece of legislation like this, yes, probably will go to one of the committees to be debated and probably will come back into this House and be introduced again, as it is or changed in such a way that fits solely the aims of the Premier and his government. If that is the final thing, so be it. But to curtail debate, to curtail the people's voice, and not give them the opportunity to say, "I'd like to see a question and I'd like to have some input," is totally unfair. I think this is the last straw. It really muzzles the people of Ontario; not only people but local organizations, local groups, local agencies and school boards as well.

Who are the people really? Is it possible that when we sit within these four walls we say we are speaking on behalf of the people but then we do what ever the heck we want? I am sure, Madam Speaker, that you as a member of this House and the other members of the House—through our community works, involvement in constituency work—do hear on a regular basis from our local constituents, and we have a lot of complaints. They may complain about high taxes, hospital care or the high cost of drugs, but when it comes to saying, "I won't allow you to speak," that's another story.

Even my seniors, I have to tell you, are enraged. They say: "You have been hammering on us. We have a measly pension, we can't afford to live in our homes, and now we can't even express our views any more?" I think that is totally unfair.

We can't support this piece of legislation as it is, but I do hope that the members who are in the House, and the Premier out there, truly, seriously will consider changing it or even abandoning it, because we believe that a

responsible Premier, a responsible government, does not have to resort to this type of referendum, to this type of governance, if you will.

In completing my remarks—I have gone through maybe a quarter of what I wanted to say and my time is up—I do say thank you, and I hope that when the bill comes back it will be a much better and improved bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Elliott): Further debate? Comments or questions?

1650

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I guess there's much I'd like to say. I had an opportunity earlier to speak to this bill, but I want to comment specifically on the fact the member has raised about debate being cut off and moving forward.

I had an opportunity in my participation in the debate to raise a question with respect to one section of the act that appeared to me to place limitations on the ability of a municipal candidate to continue to fund-raise to pay off a campaign debt. The parliamentary assistant at that time attempted to answer my question and didn't quite, and I asked for some further information. I'm very grateful that the minister came into the House the next day with a letter for me setting out what the section does. I went back over and talked to him because in fact it does set a new limit. It says that seven months after the election is over, November to June of the following year, a candidate can no longer continue to fund-raise essentially with receiptable or rebatable donations to pay off a campaign debt. I pointed out to the minister that this is a very serious barrier for individuals who may not have the financial wherewithal, and as we see amalgamated municipalities, larger wards and more expensive campaigns, for those people entering into municipal politics who don't have the backing of political parties and riding associations to pay off debts, many people will be limited or there will be a perceived financial barrier.

The minister, to his credit, said, "Thank you, and let me take a look at that." I really appreciated it and would not even be raising it now if there hadn't been a time allocation motion tabled which has no time for either hearings or the clause-by-clause process which would allow us to deal with amendments. Even if the minister goes back and says: "You know what? Lankin's got a point. In fact, this is unfair. In fact, this is treating municipal politicians in a very negative way, creating a financial barrier," even if he agrees with me and wants to change it, this time allocation motion, if the one is passed with no hearings and no clause-by-clause, would prohibit that. That's not democracy.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the Direct Democracy through Municipal Referendums Act. This particular bill—and I don't think it's a matter that has been touched on yet—also includes a provision for the region of Waterloo in particular. There has been continuing debate in our region regarding a restructuring, and the municipal councillors, whom I happen to have a great deal of faith in as to their integrity and their hard work, made a few

recommendations to this government. This government and the Minister of Municipal Affairs listened to their recommendations and facilitated, and first unified, the bus service in the region of Waterloo, which is most important. As our municipality grows, many individuals have to cross municipal lines in order to go to work or go to school, and that was facilitated some time ago by this government.

The second recommendation that is contained in this bill will permit for the direct election of regional municipal councillors for the first time. To date, the mayors and regional councillors were elected by the municipality, and now they will be elected directly. I think this is the first big step for major municipal reform in our region and I'm pleased to support this bill.

Mr Colle: It's interesting, the reference in this bill also to restructuring and changing some of the governance in Waterloo region. In the city of Toronto we were told, "If you really want to save money, you should have one level of government." They got rid of the upper level and just had one level. All of a sudden there's a double standard. In Waterloo they're saying, "No, no, you need two levels," so in Waterloo they're creating another level of government with direct election. I just don't get the rationale here. Then in Toronto we were told, "Use the provincial riding as your basis for municipal elections." They're doing neither in Waterloo. So what's good in Waterloo, where the Tories hold power, is much different from what supposedly happens here in Toronto. It's part of the double standard Toronto is treated with, but around here we're used to having Toronto kicked around.

Second, there's another interesting clause which says that if you want to put a question on the ballot—the elections are coming up in November—you have to have the question approved six months in advance. That means that municipalities across Ontario would have to get this approved within a month. It's just not possible, it seems, unless the minister extends the time for municipalities across this province to get any questions on the ballot in November. So this bill, which supposedly is about democracy, makes it very cumbersome and difficult.

In fact, as the member for York West said, it's ironic that as we're talking and the government is trying to pose as being very democratic, it's invoking closure again. This government has invoked closure more times than any other government in the history of this province. It invokes closure every day, saying there's a mad rush, yet it never wants to sit. So you have to ask, why all the closures? Why do they always want to stifle debate? Here they're pretending. This is a pretend democracy bill, because their true actions with closure speak louder than this bill.

The Speaker: Further questions and comments? Please none, response?

Mr Sergio: In my final remarks, I'd like to thank the members who have addressed my comments.

I have just a couple of things to add. Saying it's going to be binding only if we get 50% plus one—Mr Speaker, I don't have to tell you; you've been here long enough

and you have municipal experience, and we have a lot of members on the government side as well with municipal experience. To get 50% during a municipal campaign is almost impossible, I would say. Sometimes it goes from a low of 20%, 22% or 25% to 30% or 35% of the eligible voters. So that's one, and the major, stumbling block of saying, "We're going to give them a choice and we'll make sure that 50% plus one will make do," and we go to a referendum. Darn it, we know very well that it's impossible, especially in a municipal election, to get 50% of the eligible voters to come out to vote.

I believe that our system is democratic. It could be better, let's face it, because we're being curtailed on a daily basis, but our system is democratic. It's a fair system. Yes, it has some faults. Yes, it could be improved. But it still protects the individual, individual rights; minorities and ethnic minorities as well. It gives us protection; it gives us peace; it gives us a good sense that we are a well-governed community. I would like to see it that way.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): It's a pleasure to address Bill 62 today, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in order to encourage direct democracy through municipal referendums, to provide additional tools to assist restructuring municipalities and to deal with other municipal matters. Today I'll be speaking about this bill in relation to Bill 25, the Fewer Politicians Act, how direct democracy could affect my riding and how this bill will enhance municipalities' ability to govern.

As we know, this bill, if passed, would allow local communities to hold binding referenda as long as at least 50% of eligible voters turn up and a clear yes-or-no question is asked. This bill was meant to improve upon Bill 25 and other municipal acts by not only fine-tuning restructuring but also firming up the rules surrounding municipal referenda and making them binding upon the municipality. This is something that has never been done in a formal way in this province.

What it means to the everyday person is that there is light at the end of the municipal restructuring tunnel and at the same time the Harris government is now going to give citizens the right to self-legislation on matters that are purely within local municipal jurisdiction. Let's face it, the primary vehicle for service delivery in Ontario has always been local government. Municipalities can pinch pennies in places where the province could not and still maintain quality services. This is certainly the case in the new united Brant county, which has an admirable record for holding the line on property taxes. This will soon be the case for the soon-to-be-formed counties of Haldimand and Norfolk.

1700

I applaud the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Tony Clement, and the Ontario government for choosing the right course of action in bringing forward this piece of legislation that will enhance democracy in Ontario at the most important level, the local level, and give local

governments the tools they need to respond to the needs of their communities.

Citizens in Ottawa-Carleton, Hamilton-Wentworth, Sudbury and Haldimand-Norfolk have endured countless studies, petitions, discussions and referenda, non-binding referenda, as we know, concerning restructuring, without any real results. I'm proud to be part of a government that is committed to keeping those broken promises of yesteryear, of previous governments, and doing what we said we would do.

There has long been a consensus, a non-partisan consensus, that government in these four municipalities is too big, cumbersome, inefficient and costly. There has also been significant public debate in all four regions for too many years on how local government should be restructured. Our government has acted, and acted swiftly, and will ensure there is a smooth transition to the new municipalities to be created January 1, 2001.

I want to talk a bit about referenda that have been held with respect to regional government in my riding. I feel we can learn from the past. Much has been revealed over the past 27 years of debate on regionalism in my riding. Attitudes towards regional government were first revealed to me in 1971 when I volunteered to conduct focus groups for what was referred to as the Earl Berger study. At that time, Haldimand-Norfolk region was just a gleam in a bureaucrat's eye, but what people were saying then did not differ greatly from opinions today.

Back in 1971 a man from Caledonia told the Berger study, "I just think of more and more men up there doing less and less ... and taxing the farmers higher and higher just to keep them there." Another Caledonia farmer said 27 years ago, "The most frightening thing about regional government, as a farmer, are the taxes."

The idea of municipal referenda in my area is not new. In fact, in 1994 there were two municipalities that had non-binding referenda affixed to their ballots.

I would like to read an article from the archives of our local daily paper, the Simcoe Reformer. This was an article concerning the November 14, 1994, election. The title of the article is: "Regional Ballot has no weight—Simcoe and Nanticoke will ask the question about dismantling the region, but who will listen to voters' answer?"

"Thousands of Simcoe and Nanticoke voters will go to the polls Monday to vote on whether to dismantle regional government, but the plebiscite may carry little weight.

"It's a moot point," said Norfolk New Democrat MPP Norm Jamison of the vote. Last month, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs released its review of regional government, calling for fewer local politicians and outlining more responsibilities for a lower-tier government."

This is 1994, under the NDP. It's a little hard to believe just from what I've been hearing in the last few days. As is indicated, that was then and this is now.

Minister Ed Philip is quoted as saying: "We've studied and listened to as many people as possible It's now in the hands of councils" He also stated, "Referendums

are only valuable when there is a clear question." That's in 1994.

"However, if the NDP is defeated in a spring election, some local politicians say the recommendations outlined in this third provincial study of Haldimand-Norfolk government in 12 years may never be implemented."

During that election and that referendum: "Both Simcoe and Nanticoke voters will be asked if they favour the elimination of regional government and the support of one-tier local government. The results are not binding"—I'm quoting from the newspaper—"since provincial government legislation is required to make the changes.

"Local challengers in the next provincial election say they do not favour a fourth review of the region. But Liberal candidate Rudy Stickl and Progressive Conservative candidate Toby Barrett say they are interested in Monday's results.

"Stickl said such a complex and contentious issue won't be resolved with a one ballot question.

"It's only a couple of municipalities that have it on the ballot," Stickl said. "You could have a question, 'Are you in favour of abolishing the federal government,'" and I think 60% of the people would vote yes. It's too complicated an issue."

That was the Liberal view of the day.

"Tory candidate Toby Barrett was also interviewed, 'A one-question referendum is a bit of a blunt instrument,' he said." I did have some cautionary concerns. And quoting myself again: "'Once the viable and feasible alternative is costed out,' Barrett said, 'I'm more than willing to take it to Queen's Park when and if a change in legislation is needed at the provincial level.'" Again, when a promise is made, a promise is not broken.

"The Barrett quote continues: 'I don't think any form of government is here to stay. The structure of government is continually evolving and hopefully improving itself over the years.'"

I would not dream of leaving the members of this House without information as to how that municipal referendum question turned out. Again, from the 1994 Simcoe Reformer: "Then we must tally the great regional question. The vote in Simcoe and Nanticoke combined shows 10,721 want to get rid of that level of government, and 3,831 said, 'No, let's keep it,' and it means nothing." Again, that referendum was non-binding.

Another article of the day addressed the non-binding referenda in both municipalities:

"Simcoe residents want to eliminate the regional municipality of Haldimand-Norfolk but their votes likely won't make much difference to the province.

"During last night's election, 3,983 people voted to get rid of the region Council will have to take a look at the results of the referendum, but (Municipal Affairs Minister) Ed Philip has already told us what he's going to deal with the referendum, and basically that's nothing."

That was a quote from mayor, Rick Kowalsky, who is quoted as saying he wasn't surprised at the results of the abolishment question.

"In the city of Nanticoke, 6,738 people voted in favour of abolishing the region in favour of a single-tier level of local government, while 2,070 were opposed."

At that time, Nanticoke Mayor Rita Kalmbach, on hearing the results, called the vote "moot."

"Even Mary Field, president of the Norfolk Taxpayers' Coalition—a group instrumental in getting the question put on the ballot—said the vote is meaningless. 'It means absolutely nothing,' Field said. 'We haven't put the people in place to make a change.'"

It is the intention of this government to fix this sad type of situation and make it possible for local communities to hold a binding referendum, to ask a yes-and-no question and to have the municipal government take action on that question. I think this kind of legislation is a long time in coming, and I can certainly attest to the fact that local people and a number of local municipal politicians support this legislation.

Mr Colle: I appreciate the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant's survey of all the press coverage of the issues in his area. I really would like to know what he thinks and I hope he would do that in a summation.

The interesting thing about this piece of legislation is section 8.1(1)(a) which says, "A bylaw to submit a question to the electorate under clause 8(1)(b) or (c) shall be passed at least 180 days before voting day in the election."

I wish the minister would clarify how this is going to be possible with the election this November. In other words, is it going to be physically possible for municipalities, which sometimes meet just once a month, to pass a bylaw without public discussion and getting a question on the ballot for the 2000 election? I hope he clarifies that. If I read it this way, this is impossible for this coming election year. I hope he would make that amendment or change; maybe it's an oversight.

The critical and most damning part of this bill is in section 8.1 again, where it speaks very clearly about the authorized question under clause 8. It says, "It shall concern a matter within the jurisdiction of the municipality." Again, who has the power to determine that? It says, "Despite rule 1, it shall not concern a matter which has been prescribed by the minister as a matter of provincial interest." In other words, the minister has the power to decide what the question is going to be and what the question is going to be on. That has to be taken out of this bill for it to have any kind of credibility. As you know, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which represents 95% of the municipalities across Ontario—also in Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant—has condemned this bill as having no credibility whatsoever. So it has to be amended dramatically to have any kind of chance of having any use.

1710

Ms Lankin: I am pleased to respond to the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. I recognize some elements of what he is talking about in terms of moving municipal referenda into some realm of a legitimate nature, a binding nature. There could be some merit in

that. The problem is in terms of some of the limitations within this bill itself. We have spoken in terms of the participation rate and whether that's sufficient, but I think the point that was just made, that you're only allowing municipalities to put questions on that are "within their jurisdiction," and that that jurisdiction can be prescribed or changed by the minister—the minister can declare a provincial interest and therefore prohibit a municipality from canvassing their own citizens on an issue of relevance.

It also begs the question—because another section allows the minister to place a question on the local ballot—why you would be prohibiting municipalities from pursuing any question that they're interested in putting to their people, even if it is outside their jurisdiction. It may not be binding, therefore, but they may want to seek an opinion from their people with respect to some provincial initiative, like the downloading that has been taking place, as an example. You're stopping that and yet you're giving yourself the power to put your own question on that municipal ballot.

So while there are elements here where I can see a glimmer of where we might go in a brave new world in terms of direct democracy, there are real limitations in terms of the way this bill is constructed. It has more in terms of its flair and rhetoric than it does in terms of its substance, unfortunately, because I think the day has come where citizens do want more participation in direct democracy. Unfortunately, this bill doesn't provide that.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm happy to join in the debate and thank the honourable member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for his commentary. By giving some local flavour and some local experiences, he has enlightened all of us as to some of the local effects and local needs with respect to this particular piece of legislation when it comes to direct democracy.

I would say to the honourable members of this House that this is a step in the direction that we all want to take. I'm particularly perturbed by the honourable members of the opposition who, in the course of the debate this afternoon, have suggested on one level that this bill doesn't go far enough, when in fact it was their party that filibustered the consideration of direct democracy at the committee level on the basis that we went too far. That was good enough a couple of years ago, to say that we were going too far when it came to direct democracy and in particular when it came to citizens' initiatives, and now they're saying we're not going far enough. I'm quite happy to take on the record their current position, but I have no confidence that it'll be their position next week. That's the big problem.

The honourable member indicated that he was concerned that the current piece of legislation could not be effected in time for the 2000 elections. I encourage him to read on in the bill, because there is a specific section, which I'd be happy to give to him at the close of debate today, that deals specifically with his concern. It is something that we have thought of. We want this bill,

should it gain the confidence of this Legislature, to be in place within an appropriate period of time so that municipalities and their citizenry have the advantage of the rules in place, the credibility in place, to ensure that any referendums on the 2000 ballot have the credibility, have the rules in place, have the legitimacy that we all want to see, I would assume, on both sides of this Legislature.

Mr Duncan: I'm pleased to comment on the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant's statement. A couple of issues: First of all, again to the minister, we suggest your position has changed quite dramatically too. As I recollect, in those hearings you talked about citizen-initiated referenda, and what this bill does has absolutely nothing to do with democracy or referenda. What it deals with is muzzling municipalities, muzzling the ability of communities to speak on issues they perceive to be of some importance.

I find it somewhat ironic, and I can tell you, as House leader of the official opposition I'm now faced with the threat by this government of bringing closure in on their democracy debate. That's what we talked about. The last thing I was told was that we're going to have closure. I challenge the government: If you're really intent about democracy, and this bill is all about democracy, then don't shut it down. Don't allow this nonsense to go on. Allow us to have meaningful debate and, most important, let us have committee hearings. If you're truly interested in democracy, as you say you are, if that is where you're going, I suggest to you that you won't use the great mallet of closure to stifle this Legislature and to prevent public input into this bill. If you're all about democracy, you ought not to be afraid of that.

We'll find out on Monday, I suppose. Earlier today we thought we were going to have hearings. We thought this was agreed to. Then all of a sudden, "Well, we may have to bring in closure"—just another example of the government saying one thing and doing quite another, and that's a great irony in this particular bill. I stress that this bill has nothing to do with democracy and has everything to do with the province trying to control and muzzle municipalities.

The Speaker: Response from the member.

Mr Barrett: I appreciate the feedback from the members, and from other members who also wish to provide feedback. It's regrettable they now have to leave. I'm very appreciative of Minister Clement's close monitoring of the riding of Haldimand-Norfolk and also of the new united Brant county, which encompasses part of my riding.

I want to just make reference to some very recent comments from local municipal politicians, again quoting from our daily paper. The headline on the front page is, "Politicians Optimistic About New Referendum Legislation." This is written by Monte Sonnenberg. It leads off: "The Harris government's plan to introduce binding referendums at the municipal level is playing to generally favourable reviews in the local area."

I wish to quote from a Simcoe councillor. You will recall the town of Simcoe had that non-binding referen-

dum in 1994: "'My gut feeling is this is a good thing,' Simcoe Councillor Charlie Luke said. 'But I could see it being very important that the public is well informed on what they are voting on.'"

Another councillor down in the township of Norfolk, Roger Geysens, "likes the legislation's 50% threshold for voter turnout. Municipal elections rarely attract 50% of the electorate, he said, meaning the question would have to be of great importance before it attracted the required interest." Back in 1980 that township had a referendum on regional government. It was non-binding, so of course nothing happened.

"Nanticoke Mayor Rita Kalmbach"—they also had a non-binding referendum—"says there are many potential benefits to putting questions directly to voters. Often with contentious issues, Kalmbach says the public hears only the views of a vocal minority, prompting some to conclude that this is how the community feels."

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Curling: Indeed it's a pleasure to rise and speak in respect of this Bill 62, which talks about direct democracy. I feel this government feels that they could better serve the people if there were no people there to serve. In other words, the government here feels that if they could just go away, it would make it much easier because people get in the way of their governing.

1720

Remember when this government came into power. The Premier said, "Listen, I am here not to be government; I'm here to fix government." In other words, "I'm not the government." In other words, "I'm going to disregard all the democratic processes that are there; I'm here to fix them," and he surely put the fix to them.

Democracy is about people participation. This government is about making sure that people do not participate. The direct democracy that we see here is basically not allowing people to participate. It is obvious. If you read Bill 62, it tells you that. It tells you: "We will tell you when to speak, how to speak and what to say. We will tell the municipalities when to speak, how to speak and what to say at a certain time. If anybody crosses over the line of provincial interest, we will then tell you that's it."

The fact is that we know that democracy is better served when we have people fully participating. We know better laws are made when people fully participate, because laws have impact on people. Laws are about people. Laws are for the people and must be made by the people. This is what I tell the young people in my constituency of Scarborough-Rouge River and all across the province when I see them. I say, "We live in a wonderful country, and any laws that have been put forward by a government, you should make sure that you participate." But this government, ever since its inception, is making sure that all the people do not participate.

I think they started off with the people here in the House, in the opposition. You can recall, Mr Speaker, you were very adamant about that too. I could see the expression on your face when you were a member sitting over there, before you were Speaker, when they were

ramming through this amalgamation, this omnibus bill, this bill that asked that no one participate: "We will do it when we want, as fast as we can, without any kind of consultation at all, and we will amalgamate every city when we want just by regulation, by the back door of cabinet" and saying, "Let's do it" without any participation at all.

Then my colleagues here sat up and said, "No, this will not happen." The people outside were responding in that manner. They said, "We can't believe that a government would come in that had just got the mandate of the people"—not 50% really; less than 50%—"and now is dictating to every single one of us, saying, 'We will put a bill through without any consultation.'" It's the norm of the day.

This government refused to come back to meet after a long session, from December 23 to April 3. Normally the rules say that we should be back by March 9—a long session, while members of the opposition were ready and prepared to bring issues before the House to be debated, to be heard, concerns of their constituencies. But this government felt they would take their own sweet time and come into the House late.

After all the built-up frustration and with all of those issues to be discussed, what happened? The first bill that they brought in here, they put closure to it. All this time we were waiting to have a debate and they said: "Enough. We don't want to hear from you within the House here." Closure also means that in the closure bill they're saying they will not go for public hearings, for the people to participate. "We don't want the people to participate to make the laws of this country." We are told, very much so, what to do.

Democracy, as far as this government is concerned, happens every four years, and then they say, "Will the opposition, the municipalities and the people just go away and let us do what we want to do, when we want to do it." It's another "D"—not democracy; it's dictatorship that we have here in this province, this wonderful province where the participation of people is completely limited and restricted.

For instance, I was prepared today to speak for about two hours on this issue, because it is very close to my heart and very close to the people of Scarborough-Rouge River, very close to the young people who will be taking over the reins, ruling in some time. In a short time, some of our pages will be ministers. Of course they want to see the democratic process proceed. But no, this government will tell you, "We will restrict people from speaking," and it is awful. It is awful that even in my constituency, in my riding, in my area, in my city of Scarborough, where we have almost half a million people residing, we can be so completely ignored, people ignored who are calling my office every day to participate in this democracy, saying, "When are we going to have public hearings on this legislation?" I have to tell them, sadly so, "It will not happen." It will not happen because this government has put closure and it restricts any public participation in this kind of debate. It's a sad day. It's an extremely sad day for Ontario. It's a sad day for Canada.

Why people don't participate any more is that they feel they can't make a difference. When we do that we are in a situation where they will do whatever they want. Who is more vulnerable in a society like this? The government must represent all the people, especially those who are the most vulnerable in our society, those disenchanted and disillusioned individuals, those who are disabled, those who are poor, those who don't have access to justice like those who have money, who are hoping that government will give them an opportunity to come and say: "Here are my concerns. If you make laws, I would like to have some participation to tell you what impact this legislation will have on me."

But this government says: "No, we don't want to hear from you. We heard from you when we had an election and that is enough." So they ask further. They say, "Would you hear from our municipality, then, those local elected individuals?" They said yes in a very soft way, but with a lot of restrictions. "We will tell them when and how and if they cross the line." Then they said: "In a referendum we will put it forward. We'll debate the referendum all the time." But what has happened now with all these referendums? People are restricted.

I understand they have to put it about 180 days before the government can even consider it and then they will decide if that is a good question or not. That's not a democracy. It's the people who decide, all along, over the hundreds of years democracy has been around. The fact is that we have proven, very much so, that the people seem to be quite ahead of the government. When governments or parties get out of line, they replace them. As a matter of fact, they would like to know—to wait four years or five years or whenever they call the election is a long time—"In the meantime, in the process, could we put together laws that reflect us in our society that we have in Canada that we boast so much about, our diversity?"

It is much more complex to make laws, because the fact is people have different motivations and directions in their lives and it's better for a government to understand that, to understand that we are dealing with a diverse community, a community that raises their children in different manners, a community that has a diverse religious background, so they see their values in slightly different ways.

It is important for government and representatives to listen very carefully, to give access to their representatives, access to their ministers. We don't even have access to many ministers here. They're not even here very much at times for us to put questions to them, and even when we do put questions, we don't get answers. So what has happened? We don't have representation so the people can come forward and see their representatives speak in the House and say, "Here it is." We're restricted. We're restricted by closure. We don't meet for a long time in this Parliament and when we do meet we are restricted when we wish to speak. When that happens, we also cannot get the opportunity to put the questions to the ministers here, because they don't answer those ques-

tions. When the people say, "Take them back outside so we can have some public hearings and air this," oh no.

What has happened is they feel there should be no public hearings, because the fact is people do get in the way. As far as this government is concerned, if we only can have people out of the way, their democracy can operate better. They don't have to consult. They don't have to get to the people for any dialogue. Whatever they say is right. Whatever laws are put here by someone, at night or somewhere where they've read it, that's the law of the land. That's not democracy. That's not direct democracy.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): It's my pleasure to have this opportunity to have two minutes to respond to the member for Scarborough-Rouge River. I can even take this opportunity to respond to the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, and I apologize for my indiscretion before. I thought I did have two minutes.

Democracy: When I spoke for a brief two minutes about this same bill the other day, I said that what we're seeing here is the death of democracy in this province. We've seen it incrementally since 1995, bit by bit being taken away from the opposition and indeed being taken away from our municipalities and from the people we represent. The member for Scarborough-Rouge River, I think, spent most of his time talking about that.

1730

What I want to say to the government—and I'm glad the Minister of Municipal Affairs is here today—is that it's very interesting that the government is proposing in this bill to make sure there's a clause in it that makes them able to declare a provincial interest. What I would say to the minister, in response of course to the member's comments, is that the Oak Ridges moraine issue is before us and the people of Richmond Hill and others in that area would like very much for this government to declare a provincial interest in that case. They're pleading with the government to declare a provincial interest. In fact, it is of great provincial interest, and yet the government made a decision in that case to not do that.

You can't have it both ways. This is a situation where the municipality is saying, "We need some help with this. We've got a big problem. You took away some of our tools under a previous act and we need your support and help with this," and he's saying: "No, no, you've got the tools. You take care of it yourselves." I believe that is a serious contradiction here.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, I'm looking forward to the hockey game which starts in about an hour. You would know that because you're participating.

But I want to respond to the member—not Broadview-Greenwood but more the member for Scarborough-Rouge River. No, I'm going to skip that and go right back and rewind to Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. The member there really, I believe, touched on the most important point of participation in democracy.

I personally want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Mr Clement, who's here this after-

noon listening—and responding, I might add—to the comments made here in the debate today. I can assure you that minister is well known for his ability to participate directly in the governance of the province, and I commend him for that. I'm waiting on every opportunity to directly speak with him on this new Direct Democracy through Municipal Referendums Act. As many people watching would know, I've spoken on this and almost every act that's been before this House today, and I mean this in all humbleness. The member from Hamilton West earlier today—and I'm taking exception, although he's not here. Not to point that out, Mr Speaker, but he isn't here. It's late in the day and only the really reliable members are here. But he took exception with the clause dealing with the Henry VIII provision, which I might repeat for the press here is section 11.10. Members with some experience would know actually, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke would know that almost every bill has within it some sort of empowerment of the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations authorizing the city to do anything that is not—

The Speaker: Order. The member's time is up, I'm afraid. Order.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I want to compliment my colleague from Scarborough, whose speech I heard in its entirety, some of it in my office and some of it here in the House. His comment and the bill of course invite citizens to think about the relationship between themselves and government.

I just want to say personally how annoyed and angry I am this week to read the report of the information commissioner. I see the Minister of Municipal Affairs is here. I say this also as somebody who's been a long-time customer of the Province of Ontario Savings Office. I think I'm pretty tolerant about the mistakes that governments sometimes make, but I am mad as hell about this one. In 1997 or 1998—it's recent, a couple of years ago—an agency of the government of Ontario, led by Mike Harris, entered into an arrangement with not one but two private companies, CIBC Wood Gundy and the Angus Reid polling company, to take very important, sensitive records of mine and thousands of other customers and just give them out. Then, having been caught at this, they mount in the Ministry of Finance, according to Ms Cavoukian, a very sturdy resistance to an investigation.

I have to say to my libertarian friends on the treasury bench, and I hope to all members, we should be mad as hell not just about the fact that it occurred in the first place, but at what happened, according to Ms Cavoukian, at Finance when she went to investigate. I know the people at Finance and I have a great deal of regard for the Deputy Minister of Finance. I find it very hard to believe that those people on their own wanted to put up the wall of resistance about which she has complained so rightly.

The Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mr Duncan: I too want to join in congratulating my colleague from Scarborough-Rouge River on his very

astute remarks about democracy, and to respond again notionally about what the bill is all about. The bill is not about democracy in municipalities. It has nothing to do with that. It's about control. We look at the rule changes this government brought in to stifle debate in this Legislature. We haven't talked much about those.

I can think of referenda questions in my city that have been passed by the people of our community, and my guess is that this government would have never allowed those questions on the ballot. I wonder if there is a referendum question on Tecumseh's ballot this fall with respect to the appointment of a commissioner, which I am strongly opposed to—and let me say that again to the minister and to the people of Windsor—if the Minister of Municipal Affairs will allow that question to stay on the ballot. We'll see, because I suspect there will be a question on the ballot. There may be a question on the ballot in the city of Windsor, or at least the desire on the part of a number of us to put those questions on the ballot. That will be the true test of this so-called democracy bill. Again, the challenge is not just talking the talk but walking the walk, and the government has not been able to do that. I say to my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs that I know he will approve the wording of the question we are going to put on Tecumseh's ballot. He's shaking his head no, which doesn't surprise me. But we will attempt to get that, and we can talk about it further in the House at that time.

Mr Curling: I would follow up on what my House leader said. This Bill 62 has a litter of undemocratic processes in it. As a matter of fact, it openly states that if any municipality brings about a referendum that challenges the province, it will not be allowed. Here are questions they would have concerns about in their municipality and want to put them forward in a referendum. They will also say it's direct democracy, a democratic way of saying, "Let the people decide about these challenges we have for the province." The province, Big Daddy with a big stick, will say, "It will not happen."

But I'm not at all surprised about that, because this government has consistently shown that it will not allow the democratic process to happen, meaning it will not allow the people to participate. As I continue to say, once we disallow that, once we deny the people participation, once we deny that full participation, we will have lost the democratic process.

Even the minister himself in his municipality had to bow to the fact that the participation rate within his municipality is about 23%. Therefore, no question will come forth and live very long. As a matter of fact, I don't think we have three municipalities, among the thousands of municipalities that we had at one stage—maybe hundreds now—that will ever have 50% plus one of their people participating. It is our duty to represent all people, to make sure they get involved in government. The manner in which this government has proceeded is to make sure that people do not get involved, so people are very apathetic about things and they do not participate. They feel that big daddy has a big stick and they continue to bully their way in governing.

1740

The Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Churley: People may have noticed that I'm feeling a little bit edgy today. The Minister of the Environment might have noticed that earlier. Some of the talk I'm hearing in the House this afternoon since I've come back in is making me feel even more edgy. I'm hearing discussion going on back and forth that the government may be bringing in closure on this bill. I would say to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, talk to the House leader and tell us it ain't so. We haven't had an opportunity to debate this bill yet. Most of the members of my tiny caucus—there are only nine of us—haven't had an opportunity to speak to this bill yet. I know that the member for Nickel Belt would very much like that opportunity because she has a direct interest in this bill. I hope very much that at the very least today we can appeal to the minister to talk to the House leader, Mr Sterling, and tell him that we need more time to debate the bill so that all members who want an opportunity to voice their concerns, and perhaps even offer some constructive advice for amendments the minister may want to participate in, will be given that opportunity.

Minister, I wish you could indicate right now to me by a nod of your head that you're not going to impose closure on this bill. Can you do that? No, nothing. It looks like it's going to happen, so we will get an opportunity again to have another discussion, I suppose, during that time. But this is outrageous. This is why I want to talk about the lack of democracy and why I say again that we're seeing the death of democracy in this province, bit by bit. It's not a laughable matter. We saw it, and the government likes to dismiss the referendum that the city of Toronto, or all of the cities, participated in during the whole mega-city so-called debate. We made it very clear to the province that we didn't want amalgamation.

Mr Hastings: And you got it.

Ms Churley: Yes, we got it, and that's exactly my point. We said we didn't want it. Referendums were held, and the question was extremely clear, and the government said, "No, we're not going to listen to you." That's just one issue I want to talk about today. I also want to talk about Bill 26. Remember Bill 26? Remember the implications of that? It amends the public utilities act and the municipal franchises act to remove the requirement to hold referenda when granting a company the right to supply such services as public transit, water and electricity. So that's right; the government doesn't want the people of Ontario to have the right to have a say when a local government sells your utility or privatizes public transit. That's absurd. That's of direct interest to the citizens within our municipality. That has already been taken away from the citizens of our ridings.

Let's not forget the rule changes, which had a profound negative effect on democracy in this chamber.

Mr Hastings: Give us the money back.

Ms Churley: I would say to the member that he should get his nose out of his newspaper and stop grunt-

ing at me and listen to what I have to say. What I'm saying is extremely important. We're talking about democracy here, and what do we have before us but another placebo Tory initiative to make people feel good, to make them think they're actually giving them more democracy. Municipal referendums already exist; we all know that. The government is trying to impose some rules. But in some ways this bill is actually going to make it harder for municipalities to put forward a question on the ballot or to hold a referendum. By now, that has been expressed many times by many members in this House.

Let me come back to rule changes. Our time and our ability to speak to bills has been greatly been watered down. We now have situations, and we've seen it in this House—I can't remember which bills they were. A couple of bills came to this House, or I should say ministers have come to this House asking us to debate a bill before it was even printed, before it was even before the House and we had an opportunity to look at. Ministers have come forward with bills they say are fairly innocuous, that there's nothing too controversial in them and that we should just pass them. Lo and behold, after they've been out there for a while, stakeholders take a look at them and have their legal counsel take a look at them and find all kinds of problems in those bills that, had we had the opportunity to debate those bills and take a good look at them, those problems could have been found and corrected before the bill was passed. That is the kind of thing that has been happening in this House.

We see almost no committee hearings anymore. We have to beg and plead for a couple of days, which means that essentially, if we get any hearings at all, they're here in Toronto. That is fine for me; I'm a Toronto member. But we have to remember that most of the members in this House don't come from Toronto. They represent people from outside Toronto, especially in rural areas, who sometimes have very different perspectives and issues to raise. They no longer have an opportunity to participate in discussions on bills that are going to have a profound effect on their lives.

I appeal to the government to allow longer and more comprehensive committee hearings so that our constituents—if they truly believe in democracy and more direct democracy, one of the ways to do that is to give people an opportunity to participate in the debates and discussions around these bills. I think that perhaps one of the most important components, one of the most important things we as a legislative body can do is give people an opportunity to read bills, speak to legal counsel, come and speak to committees and have their say, have an opportunity to make changes to bills.

The rule changes have rendered the opposition almost powerless, and I find it depressing. I find a lot of my colleagues are feeling depressed these days, because one after another—

Interjections.

Ms Churley: And I'll tell you why. You're raring to go over there. You're happy; you have the power. But

believe it or not, one day, the way things work, some of those people will be over here and they're going to have to deal with their own rule changes and they're going to get depressed too. Let me tell you something: When somebody's in government—it doesn't matter which party stripe it is—it's very hard to change the rules to give the opposition more power. No government likes to do that. Once those rules are made, once they're changed, they're here for ever unless there's a minority government, and that could make difference. Those rules are probably here to stay for a while, and the implications of that are profound.

It's very difficult when you have a lack of committee hearings and no opportunity like we did on the filibuster, or when Alvin Curling sat in his seat and refused to vote and all of us, including the NDP and other Liberals, surrounded and protected him and made sure that that debate was allowed to be carried out, and allowed the communities to mobilize more and to get involved. That's what we were forced into doing even before the rule changes. So what did the government do? They said: "We can't have that. We're going to change the rules so it doesn't happen anymore."

Then, the NDP staged the nine-day filibuster, and I remember it well. I sat day and night at that table with some of my friends who are sitting at the table right now. As soon as we got through that, what did the government do but take that ability away from the opposition.

Practically every opportunity that used to be there for opposition members, if they felt—and I don't think, in the cases I mentioned, that the opposition was acting in bad faith. We had two very controversial bills that the majority of our communities were opposed to, and the government would not allow sufficient debate or community involvement. What that meant was that the opposition had some ability to prolong the debate in this House. That has been taken away now. So we're in a position where we have a bill before us today which supposedly gives municipalities more power to operate direct democracy. In fact, it takes some of the power that's already there away. It's nonsense. This bill doesn't do what the minister says it does. Once again we have an attack on democracy in this province.

1750

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): It's always helpful to hear from my friend from Broadview-Greenwood.

Ms Churley: Soon to be Toronto-Danforth.

Hon Mr Stockwell: That's an equally good name as well. I know the people on the Danforth, the Greek community particularly, will be very pleased about that name change. Some won't, I suppose.

Rule changes: That's often been here in this discussion on the table before this Legislature, and everyone comes to it with this pristine attitude that they themselves are the keepers of the rules. "The rules won't change because we can protect the rules that are here to protect me as a member of this Legislature." So be it, but let us under-

stand where everyone comes from. It's one of the few chances we get to measure governments and parties in the same way, because we've all had that same kick at the cat.

I know my friend from Renfrew was in the government when they changed the rules—some would say less dramatically than we did, but certainly there were rule changes there that were opposed in some circumstances by opposition members. I accept that fact. Sometimes rules need to be changed. The NDP were in power and they changed the rules very dramatically. It was as if they'd never introduced a time allocation motion. I sat in this place in one week where three were introduced—three time allocation motions in the same week.

The whole rule issue drives me a bit crazy. Yes, we did, but ultimately they also changed the rules in this place. Why did we change the rules in this place? Because the NDP didn't have enough members to warrant a party, so we had to change the rules, which they petitioned for, to allow the members opposite to stand in their place at this very moment and speak. If we didn't change the rules that day, you wouldn't have been allowed to speak like you just did for 10 minutes previously.

Ms Churley: Ten whole minutes. Thank you.

Hon Mr Stockwell: "Ten whole minutes," the member said. Well, if we hadn't changed the rules, you would have had no time to speak.

With great respect, we've all had this opportunity to be in government; we've all changed the rules. It's a pointless debate. I think we should focus on the substantive issues within the bill before us, rather than going on ad nauseam about rules changes we all made.

Mr Conway: I want to say a few things in response both to the speaker and to the Minister of Labour.

On this question of the rules, I think the Minister of Labour makes some very telling and good points. He's absolutely right: We've all been in government in the last 10 or 15 years and we've all changed the rules. It's really, for me, not an issue any more of the rules; it's the culture that informs—

Mr O'Toole: It's a deeper issue.

Mr Conway: And it is. As the member for Durham says, it's a very serious cancer with which we are dealing. I walk around this place since the renovations, and I tell you, this place has never looked better. I say to anybody watching, if you haven't been to the Queen's Park legislative precinct in the last couple of years, you should come, because the building looks spectacular after all of the public monies have been properly spent to renovate it. But there's a tragic irony. While the Legislative Building has never looked better, it has never been more irrelevant. Our parliamentary culture is in deep trouble, and we're all responsible in some ways. There are no easy fixes. There are no quick cures.

I said the other night, in speaking to this bill, that I am increasingly disturbed by what I see. I never thought I would live long enough to say that Ross Perot was more right than wrong. Ours is increasingly a plebiscitarian

democracy. The politicians of most stripes don't care, and they probably shouldn't care, about forms that reflect the attitudes of a bunch of upper-middle-class Victorian gentlemen.

Time doesn't allow me, but let me say again: Our politics are diseased by big money, our parliamentary culture is in deep trouble, and it's going to take more than rule changes to fix it.

Mr O'Toole: Respectfully, I think I should respond to the member for Broadview-Greenwood, but rather than do that I think I'll respond to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I think he raises the level of the debate, and we all accept that.

I do want to go back to the member for Hamilton West—earlier I was pre-empted from completing—it's the order that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations authorizing certain decision-making processes. This is not new. This is enshrined in almost every piece of legislation. I'm going through our legislative manual here at random, if time permits. I only have an hour left—I wish.

I'm looking here under Bill 7 at a writ of referendum. This bill has to do with the balanced budget act. It's just one, but it says that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may issue a writ of referendum and shall fix the date. Ultimately, the buck stops with our Lieutenant Governor, who is the Queen's designate here in the province, and indeed in Canada as our Governor General. I think it's important to recognize that the very fundamental thing here we're debating is the referendum, which is the participatory democracy issue. The most important thing is the participatory democracy aspect of this bill.

I have to go back on the record and comment that our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has the courage to bring forward this to empower the people of Ontario to get off their seats, their comfortable pew, as it was once said, and participate. Take control of your community by participating. Now, we have to redefine what the municipality's rights and authorities are. That's what this bill does. Everyone here should support it.

The Speaker: Further questions and comments? Seeing none, responses?

Ms Churley: I thank the members who responded. The Minister of Labour, in his usually histrionic way, did make some good points, and I agree that sometimes rules have to be changed. I would say the rule changes to give this caucus the ability to participate as a caucus were important changes. I have to remind the member that this Parliament was downsized, and we're still higher than the national average proportionately in terms of the size of a caucus to reach party status. I think the member knows that. We really should have done that when the law was changed to reduce the size of Parliament.

The reason I raise democracy—you know this bill is about democracy. It's my constituents who are telling me this; it's not just me who's feeling depressed about it. Constituents are feeling that they have less and less power to participate and more and more the feeling that nobody is listening to them. They don't know what's

going on, it's all happening so fast, but nobody listens anyway.

I do want to say, speaking of democracy, that I have a problem with the federal Liberals as well that I want to put on the record. The member of Parliament for Broadview-Greenwood went ahead and arbitrarily changed the name of my riding—it's also his riding—without even picking up the phone to talk to me about it. Suddenly I see through the Internet—I believe that's the way the other parties found out about this as well—that the name of my riding has been changed. I know your Fewer

Politicians Act implies that right away, automatically, the riding name has to change here as well. There are costs associated with that, but also I don't support the new name. I don't think it's the best appropriate name to reflect the new riding of East York and Riverdale. Perhaps that should be the name. But what I'm saying here is once again the federal Liberals—I mean, what is happening to democracy in this country?

The Speaker: It now being 6 of the clock, this House now stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

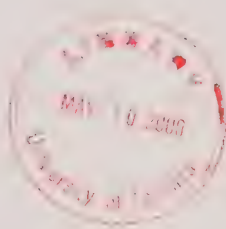
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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 1 May 2000

Lundi 1^{er} mai 2000



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} mai 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Tomorrow the government will probably proclaim that they balanced the budget. They will take the platitudes from across the province that their efforts at balancing the budget, their decisions to do all these cuts, were in the best interests of Ontario.

Let me tell you, nothing could be further from the truth. The reality is, northeastern and northwestern Ontario continue to suffer under the Mike Harris government. In a recent study it was pointed out that 17.3% of Sudburians live below the poverty level. I don't think any government, whether it be a Progressive Conservative government, a Reform government or an Alliance government, should be proud of the fact that 17.3% of Sudburians live below the poverty level.

On top of that, this government is asking Sudbury for \$45 million so that they can achieve the health care goals of the Mike Harris government. The reality is, there will be a balanced budget tomorrow, but there is a huge human deficit. There is a huge deficit in northeastern Ontario, in northwestern Ontario. It may be balanced for the first time in 10 years, but 10 years ago there were not the human disasters that there are today.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Last Thursday some of my constituents from my riding of Durham helped organize a conference presented by the Organ Donation Ontario volunteer committee of Durham region.

I want to congratulate a number of my constituents who worked hard on the committee that organized this important conference. Audrey Gregg, John Willoughby and Pat Corlett each played an important role in this event.

One of the highlights of the conference came near the end of the day when Linda Rumble and Sandra Holdsworth shared their stories with the conference delegates. Linda, who is a family member of a donor, spoke about the excellent care she and her family received from the medical staff as a whole that helped the family through

this challenging time. Sandra is a transplant recipient who is living proof of the importance of increased awareness about organ donation.

I must also recognize the outstanding contribution of another constituent, Hilda Gatchell. Ms Gatchell was the chair of the committee that organized the event. Her tireless work ensured that the event was such a great success.

Organ donation, put simply, saves lives. It is important that we raise awareness of the issue and that we encourage people to sit down with their families and discuss this important issue. Events such as Organ Donor Awareness 2000 encourages public debate on the issue.

I am also pleased that our Premier has made an increased number of organ donors a personal goal. In fact, he has set an inspirational goal of doubling Ontario's donation rate. Everyone should give this thought and consider organ donation.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): Tomorrow is budget day. If we are to believe some of the news reports, the Minister of Finance will continue this Common Sense Revolution, a revolution that has seen the most disadvantaged in our society become even more desperate. In today's *Globe and Mail*, the minister stated that he "agonized" over the cuts and that he's "a compassionate Conservative."

To portray this government as being compassionate rings very hollow. The minister said, "I think most societies are judged by how well they treat the less fortunate, and, at the end of the day, I think that's what the role of government is."

One of the first roles of this government was to cut welfare rates by 21% for the most vulnerable in our society. Is that what a compassionate Conservative is? If this government really believes in helping the less fortunate, it has failed miserably: more homeless people, more hungry children, less affordable housing, higher tuition fees, a health care system in chaos, and the list goes on.

However, I will be generous in my hopes for tomorrow. I will give this government the benefit of the doubt. I look forward to a budget where, as the minister states, "Really you just take money from people who are better off in society and you redistribute it in benefits for all." I expect a commitment to helping the most disadvantaged, housing our homeless, feeding our hungry children, caring for our sick, disabled and elderly, building afford-

able housing, creating greater access to education, and giving tax cuts to the poorest of our society. I will then proclaim this budget day a great day. I will then stand up and applaud them for having seen the error of their ways, which they of course admitted to.

NICHOLLS/CIVIC NURSES ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Today marks the 100-year celebration of the Nicholls/Civic Nurses Alumnae Association in Peterborough. The alumnae association has continued to exist for the nurses who graduated from the local hospital between the years of 1891 and 1974, the year of the last graduating class. My late mother was one of those graduates.

The dedication and loyalty of the former graduates to continue as active members of their alumnae association deserves recognition. Today a dinner will be held to celebrate this special occasion. More than 300 nurses from both across Canada and internationally will gather in Peterborough for this event.

The alumnae association has continued to support the Civic Hospital, now Peterborough Regional Hospital, through donations to purchase furnishings and decorations for patients' and family rooms. The alumnae association also coordinates the collection and documentation of hospital and nursing memorabilia for the museum and archives located in the hospital.

As the representative for Peterborough, I would like to commend the Nicholls/Civic Nurses Alumnae Association for the work they do on behalf of our hospital and community. Many patients and family members are more comfortable, thanks to their work.

Congratulations as you celebrate 100 years of service.

GO TRANSIT

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): When the Robarts administration established Government of Ontario or GO Transit in 1967, it was seen as a significant and progressive step towards a public transit system which would connect various communities in the Golden Horseshoe to the provincial capital of Toronto, and provide commuters and travellers with an alternative to the often clogged and crowded highway system. Substantial capital investment in tracks and trains and generous operating funding made GO Transit an early success and prompted subsequent governments to expand its services and modernize its operation.

The abandonment of GO Transit, and indeed of all public transit, by the Harris government has contributed to gridlock, forced a widening of highways and contributed immensely to air pollution and fuel consumption in our province.

Tomorrow's budget is a golden opportunity for the Ontario government to reinvest in public transportation and to reinvigorate GO Transit. It is time, for instance, to extend GO Transit to St Catharines and Niagara Falls to

provide commuters with an alternative to cramped, increasingly expensive and often unsafe highways, and to make it easier for tourists from the greater Toronto area to visit Niagara.

Finance Minister Ernie Eves has a chance to vastly improve the movement of people and the quality of air in Ontario. He should seize that chance tomorrow in his budget.

FRESH START CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): Today I rise to give congratulations to a company by the name of Fresh Start. Fresh Start Cleaning and Maintenance is a small company that has had tremendous economic success. In fact, over the last three years their growth in business has been over 500%. They have half a million dollars in revenue and 100 employees. But the business success is not the whole story here.

This is a company that began as a community economic development project 10 years ago. It's a company run by and for psychiatric survivors. It's a place where people who have had a struggle in their life are overcoming that struggle and, with the support of a supportive workplace, are making changes in their lives that are real.

This company happens to provide cleaning services to my constituency office in Beaches-East York, as well as to the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale. They provide these services to corporations, to not-for-profit companies. It's a regular business, but the story behind it is quite incredible.

The over 100 people who are currently working there are people who are no longer using the services of our psychiatric hospitals, for example. They estimate that's a saving to the province of \$2.7 million a year. There's another \$150,000 saving in social assistance costs as these people are working. But the biggest story is how they've achieved self-esteem, a sense of dignity and a sense of control over their lives. At the beginning of Mental Health Week, it's an appropriate tribute.

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DAVE FERGUSON

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I rise today to make all members aware of the outstanding leadership of a Canadian entrepreneur who has exemplified outstanding achievement within both the corporate and community sectors. The Retail Council of Canada selected Dave Ferguson as Distinguished Canadian Retailer of the Year for 2000.

His distinguished career has spanned more than 30 years in North America's retail industry. As president and CEO of Wal-Mart Canada since 1995, Wal-Mart Canada's growth has accelerated and has witnessed the opening of 35 new stores and the creation of more than 14,000 quality retail and construction jobs nationwide. It

is expected that 14 new stores will open in 2000. Wal-Mart Canada is based in Mississauga.

In addition to his corporate achievements, Mr Ferguson has demonstrated strong community spirit. Under his leadership, Wal-Mart Canada has built one of the country's strongest, ongoing community involvement programs. Over the past few years, the company has raised and donated more than \$6 million to local charities and causes, some of them in my riding.

Mr Ferguson will receive his honourable recognition at the Excellence in Retailing Awards taking place June 19 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): May is Sexual Assault Prevention Month. It is incumbent upon us as legislators to recommit ourselves to preventing sexual assault, educating the public and considering whether we, as the Legislative Assembly, are doing everything within our power to deal with this cancer in our society.

We know, or we should know, that sexual assault is an unwanted sexual advance or contact achieved by force, threats, manipulation or violence. It may be physical or non-physical. It may be committed by strangers, but more often than not sexual assault is committed by friends, acquaintances and relatives. Research indicates that one out of every three women, one out of every nine men and one out of every four children are victims of sexual assault. It is a crime of violence, not of sex. It is a crime of violence, anger and control that hurts both victims and those who love them.

Because most sexual assaults are not reported to the police, it is one of those crimes that cannot be visited upon through crackdowns and more investment in prosecutors and enforcement—because most people aren't reporting these crimes. It makes prevention all the more important, and it's necessary for us to consider what we should be doing, in addition to educating the public to prevent crime.

Those Ontarians who have been victims of sexual assault can pick up a phone and call a sexual assault counsellor in their community. I visited one such sexual centre in Quinte and district, ably represented by MPP Ernie Parsons. I can tell you that they're not getting the stable funding they need in order to run their sexual assault crisis line. We need an appropriate investment in this and all sexual assault crisis centres, and I look forward in the ensuing days to seeing what the government's going to do about this matter.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): On April 27, I had the honour and privilege of attending the eighth annual Police Appreciation Night held at Le Parc in Markham. One of the beneficiaries of this year's dinner is the Ontario Special Olympics Spring Games.

The Special Olympics will commence with a torch run, followed by opening ceremonies on May 11. Competitions will be held in a variety of different venues throughout York region and will conclude at Canada's Wonderland on May 14. Competitions will be held in swimming, bowling, hockey and powerlifting.

In addition to the Special Olympics, several officers from the York Region Police Force were honoured for excellence in policing. Three constables, Peter Cepelak, Christine Irvine-Leitch and Philip Mapley were honoured for bravery in the line of duty for diving into frigid waters in a Newmarket golf course pond after a van crashed through a concrete fence and ended up under water. Constable Carolyn Matthews was recognized for bravery for saving the life of a woman whose house was on fire. Staff Sergeant Rodney Sine was recognized for outstanding service to the community. He was instrumental in developing the values, influences and peers program that now runs in elementary schools across York region. Sergeant Will Janes was honoured for excellence in expanding the RIDE program.

More than \$100,000 was raised at the dinner, which was attended by York region mayors, councillors and business leaders. On behalf of the constituents of Thornhill, I congratulate the York region police for their outstanding work and ongoing generosity to the Special Olympics athletes, and we wish our Special Olympians all the best.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Stewart: Pursuant to standing order 109(b), the report sets out the assignment of ministries and offices of the government to the standing committees on general government, and justice and social policy.

The Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 109(b), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, May 1,

2000, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Mr Sterling: Pursuant to the request of the member for St Catharines, I move that pursuant to standing order (9)(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Tuesday, May 2, 2000, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I am pleased to announce today that the Ontario government is providing more than \$500,000 in grants to 38 Ontario organizations involved in addressing violence against women. These local, community-based organizations are involved in delivering prevention, treatment and education on violence against women.

The Ontario government is committed to ending violence against women, providing safe streets, safe communities and preventing crime. Violence against women will not be tolerated. Across Ontario, our government is investing more than \$110 million annually through 10 ministries to address and to prevent violence against women and their children.

Two government initiatives that specifically address the needs of women who have been sexually assaulted include, first of all, funding for 33 community-based sexual assault centres across the province. They offer crisis counselling to women who are victims of sexual assault and they provide training for the board members of these agencies. Secondly, we provide funding for 28 hospital-based sexual assault treatment centres across the province. They provide 24-hour emergency medical care, forensic documentation, crisis intervention, medical follow-up and referrals to community agencies for long-term support services.

Through our violence against women prevention initiatives, the Ontario Women's Directorate supports more than 40 programs and initiatives which provide safety, support victims and hold perpetrators accountable.

1350

Earlier this year, I attended a graduation ceremony held by the Cultural Interpreters Services of Peel. Cultural interpreters are specially trained to provide language and cultural interpretation services to assist non-English-

and non-French-speaking victims of violence gain access to the services they so desperately need. We have increased funding for cultural interpreters to more than \$1.6 million a year. In addition to the enhanced community-based program, cultural interpreter services have also been provided in the new domestic violence courts across the province.

Other initiatives include the hiring of 1,000 new police officers and provision of modern law enforcement equipment, and the establishment of a Victims' Bill of Rights.

Our government will continue on its safe streets, safe communities commitment. This commitment has already led to a number of breakthroughs in community safety in our province.

May is Sexual Assault Prevention Month. It bears repeating that this government will not tolerate violence against women and their children.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I am pleased to respond to this, given that May is Sexual Assault Prevention Month in our province and our country.

We welcome the infusion of the half million dollars, but it does little to replace the \$2.56 million for counselling programs and second-stage housing that your government took away in 1996. This is significant, because prevention is very important here. As my colleague alluded to earlier, most sexual assaults happen in domestic situations. It is not strangers who are doing this; it's family and so-called friends.

In order to address prevention, however, you have to address attitudinal changes, and that's a longer-term investment, I understand, and a longer-term goal. However, the sooner we start investing in the longer term and stop worrying about future elections, the better we'll be.

There is a low reportage of sexual assault in domestic situations, and it cuts across all socio-economic backgrounds. In fact I can tell you that middle-class and upper middle-class women are less likely to report sexual assault if it occurs from a partner or a friend. It's too embarrassing, it's a stigma and it's something that's just not acceptable in their social status. They feel embarrassed, helpless and betrayed. Equally important, Minister, is the stay-at-home mother who doesn't have the kind of professional support outside the home, and I hope you look at that as well. Mothers on social assistance or mothers of families that are the working poor in our province also have a hard time reporting sexual assault if it's in a domestic state.

I want to talk about what I know a little about and that is children and how this affects them. When I was in private practice and did a lot of work for the courts, the things that came out of children's mouths who had either observed or heard about their mothers being sexually assaulted were unbearable. We have to get to those children, because there is a high probability that they will do the same. Even though they are hurt and angry, they will do the same when they grow up—statements like: "My mother deserved it. She must have deserved it, because

my dad's my dad. He's a good man." or "Maybe it's something I did." Regardless of their thoughts, their feelings or their illness, they will grow up to do the same unless we stop them at the education and counselling level.

A couple of months ago I visited a second-stage house in Woodstock. This place had five full-time people and was cut down to one in the previous mandate. When I approached the second-stage housing, the director was actually shovelling snow; she was doing everything. The counselling program was cut. I thank the Minister of Community and Social Services for giving this lady a meeting, and I hope that that has implications for restoring the counselling program to the children in that place. For some of these women it's almost too late; they've been too hurt to trust again. But it's not too late for the children.

The other area I'd like to concentrate on in the short time I have is education. Minister, with all due respect, I would have preferred to see the money that you spent on the millennium book spent on materials on sexual assault prevention in the schools. Date rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment is high in our high schools. I'm amazed, as the mother of a young girl, how high it is, and it's scary.

When I interviewed these young ladies in my previous role at the Board of Education, again, some of the statements were unheard of and really rang some bells to me as a mother—and I'm teaching my kid right away on how to respond—things like: "Well, he only does it when he's angry. He only does it when he's frustrated. I know he really loves me." We have a lot of work to do. At the very least, commit to investing a similar amount of money to what you did in the millennium book to materials for this.

I'd like to read from a statement of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which stated in number 28 of its principal subjects of concern:

"The committee is concerned that the significant reduction in provincial social assistance programs, the unavailability of affordable and appropriate housing and widespread discrimination with respect to housing creates obstacles to women escaping domestic violence. Many women are forced, as a result of these obstacles, to choose between returning to violence or staying in a violent situation on the one hand, or homelessness and inadequate food and clothing for themselves and their children on the other."

Minister, a couple of generations ago there was a stigma in saying that you had a learning disability. Through education, we taught students that it's okay to stand up and say: "I have a learning disability. I need help." Let's teach them to stand up and say: "There's domestic violence in my home. My mother needs help. My father needs help. I need help."

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to join in placing my comments on behalf of our caucus on the record for Sexual Assault Prevention Month.

While it is always welcome news when the government makes announcements that they are going to make an investment in this important area, I do have to say that I lack a lot of information. The minister was not very specific in terms of the kinds of programs this particular infusion of \$500,000 will support. In fact, in the statement the only two specifics that are talked about are the community-based sexual assault centres and the hospital-based sexual assault treatment centres, both of which are programs that have been in place in this province for many, many years, long preceding this particular government, where we know that, for example, in terms of the community-based sexual assault centres, there is a desperate need for more stable funding. It's unclear to me whether the money announced today will go towards supporting that or whether it will go somewhere else.

I'm particularly concerned when I see the minister mix in a number of issues. She goes on to speak in the rest of the entire statement about general violence-against-women prevention initiatives, in particular, looking at issues dealing with spousal assault and assault on children. All of these issues are critically important, and we must all be dedicated to an eradication of violence of any kind in our society, particularly the kind of violence that stems from power over those who have none in the situation of sexual assault, in the situation spousal assault and in the situation of child abuse.

It also clear that it's important, when we have something as specific as a period of time to bring in education around sexual assault, that we spend our time talking about that and not mixing various sorts of initiatives together here. For example, the minister goes on to talk about domestic violence courts. Part of the initiatives there came out of the May-Iles recommendation. I could spend the rest of my time talking about those recommendations from the coroner's inquest that haven't been met, in particular, the need for community-based services.

People in the community will tell you, over and over again, that there are women who choose not to follow the court route because of all the problems inherent in that. The community-based supports there are very necessary for them, yet that's where we have seen cuts to shelters in second-stage housing programs. Again, that doesn't deal specifically with the topic that we're here to talk about today.

The minister goes on to talk about the hiring of 1,000 new police officers. The government has yet to admit that, as of today, we are still 1,200 officers short of the number of officers we had on the street in 1994. This is not a record to be proud of: hiring back fewer than you caused to be laid off with the various cuts in funding that you've made.

1400

The minister goes on to talk about the Victims' Bill of Rights, a bill which has been, in court, denounced—it's as empty as the rhetoric from the other side of the House—as something that provides no rights at all. It's a statement of sentiment. It's nice to have sentiment; it's much better to have rights that are enforceable and to

have the ability through our community agencies to prevent these things in the first place.

I remain pleased that we are standing and again, as we do every year, uniting our voices together to say that it is of utmost importance to see the eradication of this kind of violence, of sexual assault, and all that it means in terms of the trauma in people's lives.

It is a pleasure to hear the minister make an announcement that \$500,000 in grants are going to be made. I would like to know the details. Are they one-time grants? Is any of that stable funding? Is any of that going specifically to the sexual assault help lines that have been established that people can't staff? The women's assault help line in 1997 was turning away 50,000 calls a year, and it has gotten worse since then.

There are specifics out there that need to be addressed. Without the details, I don't know how far these announcements go. I hope they meet some of these needs. I hope we can continue to work together to improve the record of all of us with respect to our society and eradication of violence. I hope the next time the statement is more fulsome in dealing with the topic at hand, Sexual Assault Awareness Month, not mixing in all of your justice initiatives and attempting to take credit and saying it's having an impact in this area. I hope that we can see some real progress, measurable progress, and come back with results that show that the \$500,000 in grants that you invest this year protect women, real women, and make a difference in their lives by the time we come back to this event next year.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIMARY CARE REFORM

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question today is for the Premier. Last week we learned that you have, for all intents and purposes, given up on primary care reform in Ontario. You have abdicated your responsibility to modernize health care, to restructure it in such a way that it will restore public confidence.

Let us end this charade. Why don't you just stand up now, own up, fess up, and admit that you never really were interested in moving forward on primary care reform in Ontario and that as far as you are concerned it's never ever going to happen under a Harris government?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Last week what we learned, and tomorrow in the budget what we will learn, is the biggest advance in the history of North America in primary care reform, in rostering, in quality, 24-hour, seven-day-a-week health care. What we will also see is that it's done co-operatively with the OMA.

The leader of the flip-flop party at one point said, "It should be mandatory." Then we heard him give a speech to the fundraisers—these are the wealthy doctors who for some reason or other still attend a Liberal fundraising

event—and what he said there was, "No, it should be voluntary."

Now we have an agreement arrived at on a voluntary basis, an historic agreement with the biggest advance certainly in Canada, and I believe in North America, to primary care reform and rostering, the likes of which has never been seen anywhere in Canada. Yet still nobody knows: Are you for rostering? Are you against it? Are you mandatory? Are you voluntary? Are you—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Premier's time is up. Supplementary.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock, please. Let's wait for the people to settle down.

The leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: Mike, I've got to tell you, arrogance looks really good on you. And in passing, let me extend a very warm welcome to the Premier, who has deigned to honour us with his presence here today.

Premier, your record speaks for itself. You have done nothing to move the cause of 24-7 health care forward in Ontario. In fact, what we've learned about this deal is that you're working more to hike up costs for individual patients and families in Ontario than anybody else in the history of this province. Not only have you not moved forward on primary care reform, Premier, but you have agreed to delist and ensure that Ontarians begin to pay \$50 million more in health care costs in Ontario. That's what this deal is all about. It has nothing to do with improving health care for Ontarians, but it has everything to do with jacking up the prices they pay for health care as residents of this province.

Premier, again I ask you to stand up and end the charade; admit you intend to do nothing when it comes to putting in place 24-7 health care for Ontarians.

Hon Mr Harris: Arrogance is when you argue with reporters about whether you ever had a balanced budget or not, and the Provincial Auditor says this: "The Liberal practice of pre-flowing money via regular pre-flows, both budget and non-budget, can be viewed as an attempt to manage operating results." That's arrogance. You told us to check with the auditor. We checked with the auditor, and that's what the auditor said.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the Premier take his seat. We'll just let the clock wind down. It's fine by me.

The Premier had a little time left, if he wanted to continue.

Hon Mr Harris: Since the first half of your question dealt with arrogance, you are the epitome of arrogance in everything you do.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Premier's time is up.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock for a minute. For the benefit of all members, it would be helpful if we did address things through the Chair. As you know, there's a long-standing parliamentary tradition to do it through the Chair. That way we don't get into personal attacks across

at each other. If members could remember to try to direct it through the Speaker, that would be helpful. I believe we're at the final supplementary; the Premier's time was up.

Mr McGuinty: This response speaks volumes about the state of this government and its real priorities in Ontario. I asked a question, Speaker, and you heard it very clearly, as did the viewers. I asked a question specifically about primary care reform. I asked a question that has everything to do with modernizing health care in Ontario. I asked a question that has everything to do with the most important value that we share as Ontarians, which is protecting our sick and our most vulnerable. This Premier talked to me about a balanced budget when I was talking about health care. That tells us everything, that at the end of the day he's prepared to put dollars and cents ahead of health care for Ontarians. That's what the Premier is telling us.

The Premier stands to respond.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. The Premier knows I will call on him when it's his turn to answer. I think we had a few more seconds left in the final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Mike, the good news is that shortly your time will be up; that's the good news.

Premier, one more time, if I could have you—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the member take his seat. Stop the clock. We'll wait for the government benches to come to order.

Start the clock.

Mr McGuinty: Painful though it may be for you, Premier, I'm going to ask you to turn your mind to the issue of health care in Ontario and I'm going to ask you one more time to admit before all Ontarians that you have never had and do not have at this time any plans to put into place 24-7 health care for Ontario.

Hon Mr Harris: To the arrogant leader of the Liberal Party, let me say this: To stand in your place today and attack the very integrity of the OMA, of every doctor in this province who came to the table with our negotiating team and our Minister of Health, who came to the table—

1410

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the Premier take his seat. Let the clock run down, then. We're not going to continue when you shout back and forth. Both sides are doing it today, so we'll just let the clock wind down, because I'm not going to sit here while people are shouting across at each other. There will be no question period, then. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: The Liberal benches may not want to hear this, but the fact of the matter is that you are attacking the integrity of every doctor in the province of Ontario, who made a major commitment through this negotiated agreement towards primary care reform, unlike anything seen in this country, certainly in living memory while I have been around. It is a firm commitment and it is a proposal to proceed forward.

Now, it is not ordered, it is not compulsory, it is not the government dictating, because that is the only thing we haven't done. We did it co-operatively, which I know bothers the Liberal Party. They don't like to see things done co-operatively. If you think we should have ordered it, say so, because one day you say one thing and the next day another.

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): We've got a new Premier here today. He's the guy who wants to work together with everybody. This is news.

My second question is for the Premier as well. Last week we had an announcement telling us that you have for all intents and purposes given up on ensuring that there are places in our public, affordable universities in Ontario for all of those students who are marching through primary and secondary school today. You have said you have given up on making places for them and instead you have extended an open arm to private American universities, which will be charging the likes of \$40,000 in tuition for our young people.

Premier, why have you given up on the right of Ontario families and their children to attend affordable public universities in Ontario, something that is absolutely essential to our future economic prosperity?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think, quite frankly, even the members of the opposition know, certainly the university and college community knows and the students and parents know that this government has put more dollars into the largest expansion of colleges and universities ever in the history of the province. We've already announced close to \$1 billion of expansions, of growth for our colleges and universities. We've already announced the operating funding commitments to go with those new spaces. We have, through Super-Build—and the only reason we were able to do it—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Premier take his seat.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Premier, continue, please.

Hon Mr Harris: The record is very clear: that in addition to exploring opportunities for more excellence and more opportunities to keep Ontario students here instead of going south of the border or to Britain or to Europe for their education, and in addition to the massive expansion in confidence in the public institutions, which have applauded our initiatives, I might add, we have taken the largest steps forward for quality, accessibility, excellence and new spaces—

The Speaker: The Premier's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, check the facts. In the last five years in North America, if you take a look at the 60 different jurisdictions, all of the states and all of the provinces, we rank 59th here in Ontario. That is your personal claim to fame. We were ranked 59 out of 60 in

terms of increasing investments in our public universities. The question is, what do they get, the leaders of all those other jurisdictions in North America, that you don't get? They get that it's absolutely essential in a knowledge-based global market economy that we continue to invest in our young people and our publicly funded universities. That's what they get.

The question for you, Premier, is: Why is it that you have given up on Ontario's young people? Why is it that you've given up on our public universities? Why is it that instead you've extended an open arm to private American universities which our children are not going to be able to afford to attend? Do you not understand how important it is to maintain in place a modernized public university system which Ontario youth can afford?

Hon Mr Harris: The record is very clear: We've put in more money, more expansion, new spaces, more capital dollars certainly than ever in the history of Ontario. We have shown tremendous confidence in and strength into our universities and our colleges. Once again, I'm a little shocked when we hear the president of university after university say: "You know what? We are now so well-financed and funded and have such excellence that we can compete with the world. We can be the best in the world."

Interruption.

The Speaker: The Premier take his seat. Stop the clock. I would just remind our guests in the gallery that demonstrations and yelling at the members are not allowed. We love to have you here—I know all the members do—but we can't have a situation where people in the gallery are shouting. If that happens, unfortunately you will be asked to leave. I would appreciate your co-operation in this regard. I know sometimes the issues are very heated and people tend to get away, but that even includes clapping and so on. So I would appreciate your indulgence, for those of you in the gallery.

I believe we're at final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you may have decided that it's your job to look out for the interests of university presidents, but just so it's perfectly clear, I think my job is to look out for the interests of Ontario families and their young people.

Premier, just so you understand how bad things are getting and how little you are doing, universities are telling us that in 2003, as a result of the double-cohort mess that you have created, there are going to be 33,000 students knocking at the doors. We're also learning that over the course of the next decade there is going to be a net increase in enrolment of over 90,000 Ontario young people. You are doing absolutely nothing and your minister is doing absolutely nothing to prepare for this.

In fact, let the record speak for itself. When this minister was confronted by a student last week who said, "Where am I going to get \$40,000 a year?" she effectively said, "Let your parents come up with the money," which means, as far as she's concerned, "Let them eat cake."

I believe that we have a responsibility, Premier. We in this province and in this Legislature have a responsibility to keep the door open to the generations that have yet to come behind us. We've got a responsibility to make sure we have in place a modern, effective, efficient, publicly supported university system that is affordable for our young people.

So I ask you one more time, why are you giving up on our young people, and why are you giving up on our future?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member raises some issues of double cohort and a growing number of students, which is why we have provided for close to 90,000 new spaces here in our colleges and here in our universities—our public colleges, our publicly funded colleges. If you want to talk about students, your government hiked tuition 30% and never gave one nickel in increase in student assistance. We're the party that has put over \$1 billion into bursaries. We're the party that has put record numbers of dollars into OSAP and student aid and bursaries and assistance.

I know what Liberals say. It's why you're irrelevant. Here's what thinking people say. They said this in the editorial in the *Globe and Mail*.

"Following New Brunswick's lead, Ontario will allow the formation of private universities, a decision oddly late in coming and sadly opposed by some." You, sir, are the sad one.

PRIMARY CARE REFORM

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. This is your agreement with the Ontario Medical Association, which your cabinet colleagues said didn't exist last week, until we exposed it.

As we predicted, despite all your rhetoric about primary care, there is absolutely nothing in this document that will promote primary care. You did the same thing you did three years ago: When push came to shove, you sold out. The fee increases in this alone will cost Ontario's citizens over \$217 million. But what do the patients get? No effective strategy for dealing with the shortage of doctors, no insurance that the doctor is going to be in for the families that don't have one, nothing that will move forward on nurse practitioners or nurses being put into primary care. Premier, why did you cave in? Why didn't you insist on a plan which would ensure that physicians and nurse practitioners and nurses would be in for all the patients of Ontario, not just some? Will you go back to the table and get the kind of agreement that you spent so much time talking about?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): You're right; the agreement does cost in the \$200-million range. That's a little under 8% over four years, which is within the guidelines we set, not only for our own negotiations but for money we transfer to our partners in the broader public sector.

With regard to primary care reform, this agreement is all about primary care reform, it's all about rostering, it's all about encouraging, with the co-operation of the OMA, our family doctors to roster patients. You will hear more about this perhaps in later days.

The agreement is yet to be ratified, as you know, but let me at least acknowledge this: At least you, sir, and the New Democratic Party have been consistent in saying we should just order doctors to do it. You wouldn't do it, but you have been consistent in telling us we should order people to do things, unlike the Liberal Party, who say one day, "You should order," and the next day "voluntary," depending on whom they're talking to. I think you're wrong, but I at least give you credit for consistency.

1420

Mr Hampton: Premier, we are talking here about literally thousands of families across Ontario that do not have access to a family doctor. We are talking about patients who have small children who wait eight weeks for a doctor's appointment—a little boy who loses so much weight that he weighs less than his two-year-old brother. That's what we're talking about here, and your agreement does nothing about that.

Your expert, Dr McKendry, who went out there and surveyed this problem for you, said in Thunder Bay three weeks ago that there are now 100 communities that are short 415 physicians, the worst record ever. He said that unless you're ready to move forward on primary care, this situation is going to get worse. Premier, what do you have to say to your own expert, Dr Robert McKendry, who said you must move forward or the problem is going to get worse? What do you have to say to him?

Hon Mr Harris: What we are talking about here is a Minister of Health who has done more to correct the damage that your party left and that the Liberals left than any other Minister of Health has done. Back when you cut enrolment in the medical schools in 1992, an NDP decision, probably supported by the Liberals—I can't remember at the moment—we have had challenges. We understand that. With the Liberals slashing \$1.7 billion out of our health care funding at the same time as we're trying to deal with an aging population, trying to deal with new drugs, new techniques, and trying to deal with primary care reform, it has been a challenge. We accept that and we acknowledge that. But I can tell you that no minister has done more to implement the McKendry recommendations or the recommendations of primary care reform or to help everybody have access to a family doctor than has this Minister of Health or this Minister of Finance, as you will hear tomorrow in the budget.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): Premier, I feel like I should send the agreement over to you and ask you to read it, because it does nothing to move primary care forward; it does nothing on recruitment and retention of physicians. In fact, it moves in the wrong direction.

The other thing it does is that it sets up a process of delisting another \$50 million of OHIP services. Since you've come to office, now with this agreement, that's \$100 million of OHIP services to be delisted. Compare that to the \$10 million of delisting before you became Premier. That's money that is coming out of the public's pocket; that is privatization of the services.

Here we are about to have a budget tomorrow, where you're going to say it's a balanced budget, there's a surplus and you're going to pay down the debt. You're going to say you're going to spend more on health, that you've got all these investments to make. Tell me, why was it necessary, then, to take away \$50 million of services from the public and make them pay for it from their own pocket? Why is it necessary? Why are you privatizing this system?

Hon Mr Harris: I am surprised that the New Democratic Party has moved off primary care reform, because they have been advocates for that, and they have a track record of credibility that the Liberals would envy on that issue. I am surprised you moved off that into an area of delisting, which you started. You started delisting. Our minister has talked about modernizing the system, not delisting. You, the party that delisted all these drugs—whereas this Minister of Health has added net to the drug formulary 50 times more drugs than you cut out—all you did was cut, delist, and you don't have a good record on that.

I am surprised you would shift from where you do have some credibility of interest in primary care reform, unlike the Liberals, to an area where you were just as disastrous as the Liberals, and that is in delisting and taking away services.

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. It seems that your answer to all the health care crises and education crises you create is always the same: privatize. Here you've privatized \$100 million in health care services over two agreements.

But I want to talk just about universities, because we've pointed out example after example over the last five years of how your short funding of colleges and universities is creating all kinds of problems for our students, and last week we got your answer. What is your answer? You are going to invite scandal-plagued institutions, scandal-plagued private, for-profit universities like the University of Phoenix to come into Ontario; the same University of Phoenix that has been fined \$6 million by the federal Department of Education in the United States for misusing student aid funds.

Premier, can you tell us how something like the University of Phoenix, which has been convicted of misusing student aid funds, is going to help the secondary students of Ontario?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I really am surprised at this party. Here is a leader who went to university in the United States—

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): And graduated.

Hon Mr Harris: And graduated, I might add. Mr Speaker, every once in a while an intervention is appropriate.

Now, when we have, through SuperBuild, had the largest investment and expansion of our college and university system, taking care of over 90,000 new student placements through the SuperBuild announcements that we've made to date, I'm surprised that you wouldn't understand that, in addition to that, it disappoints us, with the quality and the excellence that we have in our institutions here in Ontario, that we still have students who go to, say, Dartmouth or Harvard or to universities in England. Our goal is to make sure that we get students from around the world coming to Ontario, where we know our publicly funded universities and colleges—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Premier's time is up.

Mr Hampton: Premier, the question was this: You're opening the door to the University of Phoenix, an institution that regularly is hauled before the federal Department of Education in the United States for misusing student aid funds. You respond by saying, "Well, you, Mr Hampton, went to a university in the States." Yes, I did. I went to a university where the tuition fees today in Canadian dollars would be \$40,000 a year. Most students can't afford that—I couldn't afford it—and that's the gist of the question, Premier.

You're inviting scandal-driven institutions like the University of Phoenix. You're saying that institutions that will charge \$40,000 a year in tuition fees are the answer. Explain to us, Premier, how that's an answer. How are students going to be able to afford \$40,000 a year? How is a scandal-plagued institution like the University of Phoenix going to help our students? That's the answer we want to hear.

Hon Mr Harris: As you know, many Ontario students are now leaving and going to other universities. Some now, with the Internet and the changes that are taking place, can stay right here in Ontario and get degrees from universities all around the world.

What we have put in place is a recognition of this reality. We've said we need now to investigate and set up a process where we can look at those universities that we think can add value, can work in partnership perhaps with our universities or colleges here and use this new technology. I don't know why, because you think one university is bad—why that university would get through a screening process, and why you would want to eliminate Dartmouth and Harvard from coming to Ontario.

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. You know, it's strange that you can't find money to modernize health care in Ontario and you can't find money to modernize our

university system and ensure that it remains affordable and accessible, but when it comes to the matter—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the member take his seat. Stop the clock.

Interruption.

The Speaker: This House stands in recess for 15 minutes.

The House recessed from 1432 to 1447.

The Speaker: I believe it was the leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: To the Premier: I want to return to the issue of the Harris land flips and the Harris land scandal, the details of which have been revealed to a shocked Ontario public over the course of the past few weeks.

I want to return to one specific deal in particular. That's the one that converted a cemetery into a gold mine for a close friend of the Conservative Party here in Ontario. That deal involved a piece of land, an otherwise insignificant 25-foot strip of land, that was turned over to Mr Damiani, a close friend of your cabinet. The issue that we're trying to figure out over here on this side of the House is whether he paid anything at all for that strip of land that converted an otherwise inexpensive cemetery into \$25-million gold mine. We know that the land was never put out to public tender. We know that your minister was involved in the deal. What we're trying to get from you is whether any money at all was charged for this 25-foot strip of land. Was this a freebie for a friend of the government?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Actually, it is embarrassing for any MPP to ask that kind of question, in that kind of tone, with that kind of language, with that kind of rhetoric, with that kind of misinformation.

What we do know is that there were a number of deals. I have no knowledge of any individual deals; neither does the minister, of this deal or any other. What we know is that there are some deals for which the chairman and the CEO have come to the minister and said: "We should be doing an audit of some of these deals, these practices over the last 15 years. Could we do that?"

The minister said yes, and if there is anything untoward, they'll take a look at it. So if you would send any information you have to the forensic audit team or to the Deputy Attorney General or to the OPP, we'll be looking into all these matters.

But I can tell you that your question, your attitude, your tone is a disgrace to the profession of politician.

The Speaker: Time is up. Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, what is truly disgraceful is your refusal and the refusal of your minister to bring forward all the facts so that we can get to the bottom of this matter right now.

I have a memo put out by the ORC dated June 17, and it is in relation to this 25-foot strip of land. In it, a representative of Mr Damiani says he believed that the 25-foot strip was included in the purchase price of the first piece of land. The person who wrote this asked, "How do I go

for market value for one abutting owner and not the other?" because it turns out that Sun Life owned the land on the other side and they were using this same 25-foot strip of land.

What we've got here is the conversion of a cemetery into a \$25-million gold mine. We've got the fact that this has not been put out for public tender. We've got the fact that this was not offered for sale to the abutting neighbour. We've got the fact that, because you haven't answered the question yet, there is a distinct possibility that Mr Damiani got this land for free. We've got all of those facts combined, and that makes for a continuing stink emanating from the ORC and the leadership you have failed to provide on this issue.

Premier, once more, why is that you have given up protecting the interests of taxpayers of Ontario when it comes to your land flip?

Hon Mr Harris: I believe what we have—and I'm not privy to any of the deals—is a deal that hasn't closed, that's under investigation, and all the facts are being made available to all those who should have them. The only thing that stinks here is you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm going to ask the Premier to withdraw that. You cannot say that to another member.

Hon Mr Harris: I would be happy to withdraw, Mr Speaker. But let me say this: You are an embarrassment to this House.

The Speaker: The Premier take his seat. The member take his seat.

Let me say this: Personal accusations going back and forth can't continue in here. I say this to the Premier: This is the third time I've seen him do it—to the member for Parkdale-High Park on one occasion and to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt—and I will not tolerate it again. If there are any more personal comments that get thrown across—and I don't know whether a Premier has ever been thrown out, but I will name the Premier. If he yells across one more personal insult to any member, I will have to name the Premier.

Applause.

The Speaker: I thank the members, but as I've said in the past, it's not very helpful when members clap for the Speaker's ruling.

ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, and it's a very important question I have.

Just before I get to my question, I attended a volunteer awards ceremony last Friday evening on behalf of the minister and the government of Ontario. The volunteers in our community are doing wonderful work in our hospitals and are disgusted at the federal Liberals' transfer payments to the province of Ontario only providing 11% for health care.

Today I read with some surprise a report saying that the funding for the Ontario Human Rights Commission

may or may not have decreased or increased. Can you put some clarity into that issue, Minister?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank the member for London-Fanshawe for his question. I'd like also to offer to the opposition that when they're going to put some information out in the public, if they want to check with the ministry first, I'd be happy to answer, because some of the comments just weren't true.

I think it's important for us all to recognize that the Ontario Human Rights Commission is doing a better job than they've ever done before in the province. In 1999-2000, 60% of all complaints filed were resolved within a six-month period. Half of the new cases were dealt with through voluntary mediation, and of those, over 70% were resolved within a six-month period or less. The average time it takes for a case to be resolved through the Ontario Human Rights Commission right now is down from 22 months in 1997 to 18 months. They are making moves all the time to reduce—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Mazzilli: Minister, I guess we can't believe everything we hear from the opposition. Certainly in this case it's not any different from other things that we hear. They are continually saying that the federal government has increased federal transfers for health care. In fact, what do we find? They've decreased since 1994.

But back to this issue, which is very important: How many cases is the Ontario Human Rights Commission hearing at this point in time?

Hon Mrs Johns: I'd like to thank the member for the question, because it's really important to correct the record. I don't like to blame other parties, but let me say that I think it's the pot calling the kettle black. The NDP had a dismal record in office when it came to success in resolving Human Rights Commission cases. The number of cases either not dealt with or dismissed was less in 1998-99 than it was in 1994-95, so we're doing a better job of going through the cases and resolving the cases. We're also going through twice as many cases—and they are receiving a hearing—than happened when the NDP were in power in 1994. So we're hearing twice as many cases. In 1998-99, 867 cases were settled, compared to just 293 cases in 1994-95.

I think you'll hear from the chair of the Ontario Human Rights Commission that things are going well at the Human Rights Commission, that they're far exceeding the expectations that they have in the budget. I can tell you that we're pleased with the way the program is working.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Premier. Liberals believe that children with Down's syndrome, children who have learning disabilities, should get extra priority in school, should be

looked after. I want to ask you about the failure of your minister to do that.

Tomorrow you're going to present a budget and you're going to pretend everything is fine in this province, but part of the cost of your tax cuts and your other things has been taking money away from disadvantaged kids. In the Durham Board of Education alone, \$11 million was being spent by that board because you wouldn't provide for these disabled kids to get their special attention in school. They tried that for a year; then they cut \$3 million. Now they are cutting another \$1.4 million. You're abandoning these kids. In the Durham board and boards all around the province, it's the price you're making the most vulnerable kids in school today pay for your twisted priorities.

Premier, the day before the budget, will you stand up and assure us that your standards don't stoop that low, that you will include these kids, that you will fix the problems that your minister has been unwilling to fix with special-needs kids in this province?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the minister can respond.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I guess I would ask the honourable member where he has been since I've been minister, because one of the first issues that I identified—

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: They don't want to hear the answer now that they've asked me the question.

One of the first issues that I identified as needing to be fixed was to further improve the services for special-needs children in our province. That's why we have increased again, for the third year in a row, more money for special needs, another \$40 million, as well as providing additional flexibility to boards, which boards and parents asked for, as well as working on standards so that we make sure those students are getting the support they need, something else we were asked to do that we are working on. All of these steps we are taking because we do recognize the special needs of those children. We do recognize that with the right support they too can have an education and deserve an education.

Mr Kennedy: Maybe the Premier was too embarrassed to give that answer, but the minister is referring to the students in her own area, in the Durham board, where the superintendent in charge of special education has seen none of the \$40 million of ghost money that you've announced sometime next year—not one penny—and says that some 50% to 60% of their special-needs kids won't be eligible for that cruel slide rule that you've set up to take kids out so you can save money in this program.

Wendy Shulte has a son, Justin, who has a childhood illness that interfered with his ability to learn languages. He no longer qualifies for assistance. He's headed for a grade 4 class without assistance unless the board cannibalizes some other program to make it happen. Minister, they've laid off 120 teachers. They've cut \$8 million in assistance to special-needs kids on your watch, in your

riding, to the students whose parents elected you to look after them.

Minister, I want to ask you today, will you guarantee a standard of care, the same standard of care that existed before you came in with your cut-and-slash agenda, will be there for special-needs kids? Will you review the formula? Will you put more money in, and will you make sure that Justin Shulte and all the thousands of special-needs kids don't have to pay the cost for your twisted priorities in the budget tomorrow?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Again, with all due respect to the honourable member, where has he been? For the third year in a row, we are increasing special-needs funding. We have just started a massive reform of how that money goes to boards so that there are better standards and better guarantees out there for parents and their children so that they get those services. Perhaps the reason the Durham board hasn't yet seen any money from the \$40 million is because the boards are only now submitting ISA claims and the paperwork for the eligibility that has to be done to make sure that this money is indeed going for special-needs children.

The other thing I would like to say is that if the honourable member had taken the briefing that my staff offered, and unfortunately he didn't, he would understand that the eligibility criteria for funding are not the same as the services and supports that students should be getting. So, regardless of where a student falls in some wonderful financial criteria, the individual education—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): My question today is for the minister responsible for children. Our government has made children's initiatives a priority, particularly for children below the age of four. In the Blueprint, we promised, "We'll give every Ontario child the opportunity for a good start in life, with early childhood learning, and with better protection and support for them and their families." Indeed, it was our government that established the first ever position of minister responsible for children.

Minister, I understand that recently you attended the World Bank Global Conference 2000 on investing in our children's future. I'm wondering if you could share with the members of this House, based on what you observed at the conference, how Ontario is comparing with other jurisdictions around the world in terms of investing in our children's future.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I'd like to thank Brenda Elliott, the member for Guelph-Wellington, for this question. It was indeed a great privilege for me to attend the World Bank global conference in Washington and to host the opening session on investing in children with Dr Fraser Mustard. I learned a great deal from meeting with individuals from

around the world who are also committed to improving the future outcomes of our children.

World-renowned Dr William Foege, an epidemiologist who worked on the successful eradication of small pox in the 1970s and recipient of many international awards, including the World Health Organization Health for All medal, spoke at the conference. In his closing remarks, Dr Foege singled out Ontario as one of the only two jurisdictions in the world that he knew of that are leading the way for the rest of the world—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Mrs Elliott: That's marvellous news. You mentioned Dr Fraser Mustard, also Margaret McCain, who of course we called upon to assist us with the Early Years studies. I understand that early childhood development programs are most effective when they are community-based. How is our Early Years study implementation ongoing with this emphasis on community-based services?

Hon Mrs Marland: I just want to finish what I was saying and then answer the second question. The important thing to know is that Dr Foege stood at the World Bank conference and acknowledged and praised Ontario for being one of two that had ministers responsible solely for children.

I'm proud of Premier Harris's vision and his commitment to the children of this province. There was a strong consensus among the countries represented at this conference, poor nations and rich nations alike, that there is a need for local community-based early childhood development programs, rather than the traditional top-down, cookie-cutter approach that governments have used in the past.

The worldwide consensus supports the recommendations made by the Early Years study and provides us with further—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up. I'm sorry. Time passes quickly, I know.

The leader of the third party.

ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Dr Kin Yip Chun has waited eight years to receive justice from the Ontario Human Rights Commission. An investigator who looked at his complaint has concluded that his complaint indeed has merit, but he has waited eight years for a hearing, eight years for justice. Justice delayed is justice denied.

Sadly, he is one of hundreds of cases that have waited four years, six years, eight years. In fact, over the last two years, in 1998 and 1999, the Ombudsman has singled out your government's sad record at the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Now, you say things are improving at the Human Rights Commission, so I'm going to take you up on your statements. If things are improving, will

you guarantee that Dr Chun will get the hearing he deserves after waiting eight years?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): As the member opposite knows, I am not allowed to speak about cases before the Human Rights Commission. But let me say that it's very clear that the people who have caused the backlog at the Ontario Human Rights Commission were the NDP. In 1994-95, they cut \$2 million from the budget of the Ontario Human Rights Commission and since that time we have been working to expedite complaints, to move cases forward within the commission—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the minister take her seat. I apologize to the minister for the interruption. Minister, continue.

Hon Mrs Johns: It's important for everybody to be able to get their hearing at the Human Rights Commission. As I said earlier, in 1999-2000, 60% of all complaints filed were resolved within a six-month period or less. Half of the new cases were dealt with through voluntary mediation and, of those, 70% of the cases were resolved in six months or less. The Ontario Human Rights Commission is doing a terrific job at going through the cases more quickly, making sure that people have hearings as quickly as possible and that people's rights are protected.

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Minister, I've just got to tell you, I find your response unsavoury, malodorous and offensive. You're only devoting a couple of dollars and a couple of services to the Human Rights Commission.

We saw what happened when your government shut down regional offices for the family support plan: It created chaos and misery for thousands of people. What you're now doing is ignoring what the Ombudsman said, the advice of the Ombudsman. You cut \$1.2 million from the Human Rights Commission. You're shutting down eight regional offices. Staff have been laid off. In 1999, the backlog increased to 485 cases from 325. Madame la ministre, you're shutting down the shop. How can you say things are getting better? You're shutting down everything.

Hon Mrs Johns: To the member opposite and the previous minister of this ministry, let me say that it's time you checked the facts. I don't know where you're getting those kinds of cuts. The people in every regional office are still there. We moved them into other buildings so that we didn't have bricks and mortar just for the Ontario Human Rights Commission, but we have people in all of those communities to be able to work with people who need it.

Let me say once more that cuts were made in 1994-95 of \$2 million. We did not cut \$1.2 million from the budget this year. I don't know where they're getting their information, but it's incorrect. We continue to work to be able to get more cases through, more people heard. In

fact, we have moved the number of cases that are being heard every year to 800 from 293 in the year the person opposite was minister.

1510

HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health. Your new agreement with the Ontario Medical Association says that \$50 million will be found through tightening and modernization. You know, as we all do, that tightening means delisting and that delisting means people paying for more of their health care privately.

The first thing you're going to delist is rehabilitation services; \$17 million worth of rehabilitation services comes from OHIP billings right now. It's not enough to meet the need, and that's why more and more rehabilitation is being paid for privately—by those who can afford to pay for it.

If you stop paying for rehabilitation out of OHIP, Minister, you must put those dollars into the same services in other settings. If you don't, seniors and others who can't pay \$1,000 or more out of their own pocket to get needed rehabilitation will just be left out. I ask you today, will you guarantee that the \$17 million worth of rehabilitation services you are going to delist will be put back into publicly funded rehabilitation care? Will you assure us that you will not use this money to pay for physicians' salary increases?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm not quite sure what the member is speaking about, but I can certainly share with the member the fact that if you take a look at this agreement, this agreement actually does respond to the specific needs of people in the province of Ontario. In fact, she will see in here that this agreement actually allows for increased access to emergency services. It also allows for increased access to specialists. It also takes into consideration the fact that as our population is aging, they have a need for more complex care, and so it recognizes that additional benefits are to be provided for seniors over the age of 75. It also recognizes that home care is a fact of life, and we need to ensure that the appropriate system of home care services is provided and that the physician has the key role.

This agreement does more to ensure that more services are available to people in this province than ever before, plus the fact that they're going to be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Mrs McLeod: You know exactly what I'm talking about, and I will take your refusal to answer the last question and my supplementary as an affirmation of the fact that you are going to be shifting services from public funds to the private payer. The physician services committee has been given the task of telling you where you will find your \$50 million. The physician services committee has already recommended to you delisting rehabilitation and audiology. They recommended it last year;

you delayed it. They will recommend it again this year. So you are going to delist rehabilitation services and you are going to delist audiology services.

Delisting audiology might be all right, provided you will guarantee that hearing tests are not going to be something else that people, again particularly seniors, will have to pay for out of their own pocket. You were supposed to come up with an alternate plan for audiology services last April. There is still no plan and there is no place else right now that people can get the hearing tests they need.

Minister, I will ask you again, will you assure us that seniors and others will not have to pay for hearing tests, that they will not have to pay more to get rehabilitation so that you can find the money you need to pay doctors' salaries through your agreement with the OMA?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's unfortunate that the member opposite would speculate about events that have not occurred. It's very important to take into consideration that the tentative agreement—and I stress tentative agreement—that is in place actually specifically responds to the needs of people in this province, very particularly the needs of people who need the emergency room service. It speaks to retaining physicians in the province of Ontario. It speaks to recruitment. It speaks to ensuring that people can work together in the primary care reform network.

We look forward to seeing more health providers providing the appropriate level of services. It is a fair agreement that will provide more services than ever before for people in this province, and it doesn't speak to the issues that the member is bringing up today.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): My question is directed to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. I am sure that you and all of us are aware of the skills shortages in Ontario. The shortages are especially acute in Cambridge, with its booming economy. This is a troubling problem we need to address in order to compete in the global economy. What is your ministry doing to prevent this problem from stalling our province's economic growth?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): It is true that the number of skilled workers needed has surpassed the number of skilled workers trained in our province on a yearly basis. Because of the positive economic environment that the Harris government has created, we have a contribution in that. That's why we have developed a program called the strategic skills investment program. Our government has invested \$45 million in 28 programs, which has triggered a \$135-million investment by the private sector over the last two years. Its success has encouraged 300 companies and 85 business associations and organizations to financially support this program. It's also why our government will continue to commit an additional \$85 million over the next five years. We understand that our highly

skilled, well-educated workforce is one of our key competitive advantages, and Ontario is going to maintain that strategy.

Mr Martiniuk: Conestoga College is in Cambridge riding, and it's a college we are all proud of. Conestoga has been awarded some money for their information technology training centre proposal that will address some of the shortages in the information technology sector. Can you please tell me more about the strategic skills investment program, Minister, and how others can participate in this program that addresses skill shortages in our province?

Hon Mr Palladini: I want to mention to colleagues in the House that we want to make sure that when businesses look to invest in our communities, we're going to be ready. The strategic skills investment program will make sure we have the workforce to compete.

As the member for Cambridge said, on April 20, 2000, along with announcing Conestoga College's proposal that will be funded \$2.6 million, I also announced six other winning proposals to help us accomplish a great deal more. Contrary to what the Liberal leader has to say, our young people are going to get the tools they need to compete globally. I'm sure the members of this House will want to share with their constituents that the fourth call for proposals through the strategic skills investment program has begun and is now accessible on our Web site, www.ontario-canada.com. Our government recognizes the importance of developing skills today for jobs tomorrow.

LITHOTRIPSY

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is to the Minister of Health and it concerns lithotripsy in eastern Ontario. Minister, I was really struck and quite frankly very concerned by your response to me on April 20 of this year on this question, so my follow-up question to you today is simply this: What has changed about your commitment to fund lithotripsy at the Ottawa Hospital from that time in December 1997, when you, as Minister of Health, wrote to an individual in Vanier, eastern Ontario? Let me quote part of your December 18, 1997, letter to that individual: "The Ontario Ministry of Health has recently reviewed a proposal for lithotripsy services in Ottawa. We have advised both the Ottawa General Hospital and the Ottawa Civic Hospital that we would support the development of a lithotripsy program as one of the services to be offered at the new Ottawa Hospital."

You were much less supportive in your response to me on April 20, 2000, than you were in that letter two and a half years ago. Minister, what has changed?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the member knows, we continue to monitor the need for services in the province of Ontario, and when there is an additional need for services, as there may well be at some point in the future, then we will ensure that those services are provided. But

at the present time, all of the information that we have and all of the review that we have done indicates that there is sufficient capacity within the province. There has been no increase.

1520

Mr Conway: Minister, you know, because your colleagues from places like Nepean and Ottawa and Carleton have told you, that over the last number of years, not just in Ottawa-Carleton but throughout eastern Ontario, hundreds of volunteers have gone out and raised nearly \$1 million to buy this lithotripter, which is sitting in a crate at the Ottawa Hospital, while hundreds of people not just from Ottawa-Carleton but from places like Pembroke and Perth and Prescott either go under the knife in Ottawa or go down the road with this very painful condition to Montreal, Toronto or London.

My question in supplementary is this: What advice, Minister, do you have to all of those volunteers who raised all of that money so a very important piece of high-tech health technology could be purchased only to sit unopened in a crate at the Ottawa Hospital while constituents of mine are forced to either go under the knife in Ottawa or, worse still, in this terribly painful condition go down the road 600 kilometres to London?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We presently fund two lithotripters in the province, one in London and one in Toronto. These two centres currently provide about 5,000 procedures annually for patients across the province. We did review again in the summer of 1999 the need for additional services, and I can assure the member that the need has remained constant. In fact, the Ottawa Hospital agrees that the programs in London and Toronto today have access capacity and that they can accommodate emergency referrals in a 48- to 72-hour period.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I affix my name to this petition.

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I have thousands of signed petitions here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians with a developmental disability are in growing danger of inadequate support because compensation to staff of not-for-profit agencies is, based on a recent survey, on average, 20% to 25% less than compensation for others doing the same work in provincial institutions or similar work in other settings; and

"Whereas there are hundreds of senior parents in Ontario who saved the Ontario government millions of dollars by keeping their child with a developmental disability at home, and who are still caring for their adult child; and

"Whereas there is no place for most of these adults with a developmental disability to go when the parents are no longer able to provide care; and

"Whereas these parents live with constant anxiety and despair; and

"Whereas these adult children will end up in Ontario nursing homes and hospitals if there is no appropriate place to provide care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To significantly increase compensation for workers in not-for-profit agencies so that it is comparable to the compensation of government-funded workers in identical or similar occupations; and

"To provide the resources necessary to give appropriate support to Ontarians with a developmental disability who at present have no place to go when their parents are no longer able to care for them."

I affix my signature. Thousands of people have signed this.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition signed by a number of people from the Chatham-Merlin area. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer, also called Our Father, has been used to open the proceedings of municipal chambers and the Ontario Legislative Assembly since the beginning of Upper Canada in the 18th century; and

"Whereas such use of the Lord's Prayer is part of Ontario's long-standing heritage and tradition that continues to play a significant role in contemporary Ontario life; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is a most meaningful expression of the religious convictions of many Ontario citizens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario maintain the use of the Lord's Prayer in its proceedings in accordance with its long-standing, established custom and do all in its power to maintain use of this prayer in municipal chambers in Ontario."

I'll affix my signature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further petitions.

SAFE STREETS LEGISLATION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Welcome back, Speaker.

I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas charities such as the Goodfellows, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, firefighters and many others participate in fundraisers on streets, sidewalks and parking lots;

"Whereas Bill 8 effectively bans these types of activities, putting police forces in the position of ignoring the law or hindering legitimate charities; and

"Whereas charitable organizations are dependent on these fundraisers to raise much-needed money and awareness;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask the government of Ontario to amend provincial legislation to allow charitable organizations to conduct fundraising campaigns on roadways, sidewalks and parking lots."

In support I affix my signature.

ABORTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, it's a pleasure to see you back in the chair after your short, brief absence.

One more bit of news, if I may, while I'm on my feet here. You would probably like to know that the provincial Legiskaters played the federal MPs and we defeated them 12-2 last Thursday.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): That would more properly be done in members' statements or something, but maybe we could just continue with petitions.

Mr O'Toole: "To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas we have recently learned that our tax money is being used to pay the rent on the Morgentaler abortuary; and

"Whereas by the end of his lease this amount will be \$5 million;

"Whereas we strongly object to this use of our health care tax dollars;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately cease these payments."

This is submitted by Maria Speciale, as well as other people from my riding of Durham.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Certainly we're hoping that in tomorrow's budget we will hear some news about the northern health travel grant and the inadequacy of the funding for that program, which is sending many people to sign petitions. I will read it now, sir.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for patients needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I have hundreds of people's names, with over 10,000 signatures overall. I hope the government will listen.

1530

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "Whereas the prayer, Our Father, also called the Lord's Prayer, has always been used to open the proceedings of municipal chambers and the Ontario Legislative Assembly since the beginning of Upper Canada under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe in the 18th century;

"Whereas such use of the Lord's Prayer is part of Ontario's long-standing heritage and a tradition that continues to play a significant role in contemporary Ontario life;

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is the most meaningful expression of the religious convictions of many Ontario citizens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario maintain the use of the Lord's Prayer in its proceedings, in accordance with its long-standing established customs and do all in its power to maintain the use of the prayer in municipal chambers in the province of Ontario."

I'll affix my name to this too.

HUNTING IN WILDERNESS PARKS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This is to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas wilderness class parks are quoted on the Ontario Parks Web site as 'substantial areas where the forces of nature are permitted to function freely and where visitors travel by non-mechanized means and experience expansive solitude, challenge and personal integration';

"Whereas sport hunting should not be permitted in wilderness class parks, which are intended to preserve and protect biodiversity in its natural state. Hunting in wilderness parks will disrupt and damage ecosystems, introduce mechanized transportation and intrude upon the use of other visitors;

We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

To withdraw the policy change in the Living Legacy report that will allow sport hunting in wilderness class parks.

This is signed by, it looks like, a couple of hundred people in the Bracebridge and Huntsville area.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government's plan to force the sale of subsidized housing in Hamilton-Wentworth will create a crisis for 700 local families; and

"Whereas in addition to these 700 families there are 3,700 other families on waiting lists who will be left without affordable accommodation; and

"Whereas the Harris government's housing sell-off is mean-spirited and targets the poorest families, who are now threatened with possible eviction;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario direct the Harris government to save these affordable housing units for low-income families, and support new affordable housing to help the 3,700 families on waiting lists throughout Hamilton-Wentworth."

I add my name to the those of these petitioners.

ILLEGAL TIMBER CUTTING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas timber cutters are trespassing on private and crown land, cutting, removing and selling trees, leaving a financial, environmental, aesthetic and emotional devastation in their wake; and

"Whereas the OPP have no authority to stop a cutter from cutting in the event of a boundary dispute, but may only inform the cutter that a complaint has been lodged; and

"Whereas the mills accept all timber from their contractors whether it is stolen or not; and

"Whereas the practice of the crown attorney's office to relegate these obvious theft issues to civil court places an unreasonable and prohibitive financial burden on the landowner who is the victim; and

"Whereas the offending cutters are protected by their numbered companies, lease their equipment and declare bankruptcy rather than pay fines and restitution, and immediately register a new numbered company, the landowner-victim must then pay:

"(1) All court costs and legal fees incurred by the offender as well as their own legal fees;

"(2) The cost of the survey;

"(3) The cost of hiring and posting bond for a bailiff, an appraiser, a salesman and bond for each piece of property and for equipment seized from the convicted cutter at the rate of at least \$2,000 for each of the above-listed;

"(4) The cost of cleanup and reforestation; and

"Whereas traditionally settlements to landowners, the victims, have amounted to the price of stumpage fees for the stripped area, while the cutter profits from the full price of the timber from the mill; and

"Whereas, because the offending cutter must work quickly to avoid detection, he/she leaves the land devastated, with little or no thought to environmental areas of concern, such as wetlands and reforestation;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness to landowners-victims in the overwhelming support of illegal cutting of private and crown lands.

"We advocate:

"(1) That the cases be tried as grand theft in a criminal court;

"(2) That in the event of a boundary dispute the party who is to benefit financially (ie, the cutter) be responsible for the cost of a survey by a registered surveyor and not a forester;

"(3) Final judgements should not only include fines, all costs incurred for pursuit of justice and stumpage fees, but the full price of the timber, the cost of cleaning up the clear-cut area and the cost of reforestation and maintenance of the cut area, thus making theft of timber from private and crown lands potentially non-profitable; and

"(4) Contracts of convicted cutters should be subject to suspension or termination, just as drunk drivers lose their licences."

This is a major issue in the Thunder Bay district and I'm sure it is one across the province. I am pleased to support this, as does my colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I continue to receive petitions from Buzz Hargrove on behalf of his members in Ontario. I would like to point out that these petitions were circulated by Cecil Mackasey and Rick Roberts of CAW Local 222. Many congratulations to them.

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances known as carcinogens; and

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to carcinogens; and

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances; and

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer and that the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

On behalf of my NDP colleagues, I proudly add my name to those of these petitioners.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 62, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in order to encourage direct democracy through municipal referendums, to provide additional tools to assist restructuring municipalities and to deal with other municipal matters, when Bill 62 is next called as a government order, the

Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy; and

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That the standing committee on justice and social policy shall be authorized to meet for one day, and that the committee be authorized to meet beyond its normal hour of adjournment on that day until completion of clause-by-clause consideration; and

That, at 4:30 pm on that day, those amendments which have not been moved shall be deemed to have been moved and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following completion of clause-by-clause consideration, and not later than May 17, 2000. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on or before May 17, 2000, the bill shall be deemed to have been passed by the committee and to be reported to and received by the House;

That upon receiving the report of the standing committee on justice and social policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That when the order for third reading is called, one hour shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At the end of such time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That the vote on third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "Deferred Votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

1540

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the member for Essex.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): When I first came here this afternoon, I was prepared to speak on second reading of Bill 62, but as you now know, there has been a motion introduced to close debate on this, to censure any further debate. Now we're left with yet another motion that to me is rather ironic, particularly when it comes to this bill. We just heard the minister, in introducing the motion on Bill 62, using the words "encourage direct democracy," and yet what this closure motion is doing this afternoon is absolutely stomping on democracy. In other words,

there are colleagues of mine, and there are colleagues I suppose on the back bench of the government, who were prepared to speak to this bill. We all had recommendations to make towards this bill, and now, because debate is going to be limited, we won't have that opportunity.

I don't know how many times since 1995 this government has used closure; in fact, I've lost count. Back in 1993, when I first came to this place, I thought I came here as a representative of my riding to speak out on all sorts of legislation; to, yes, in some cases bring forward amendments to that legislation; and, on those occasions when we can—and we have—to support government legislation. But it's difficult to do when the opportunity to speak on behalf of your constituents is taken away from you. I remind the backbenchers that not only are you limiting our democracy in this place, but the cabinet, the Premier's office, those around the Premier who decide that these debates should be limited are taking away your democracy as well. I think you should well heed that.

At first I thought, well, with my 10 minutes I should simply stand in my place and say nothing, because essentially that's what the government is telling us: "We don't want to hear from you. We've heard enough. We don't want to hear any more. We don't care about the democracy that's mentioned in Bill 62. We just want to get on with it and get out of here, and by May 17," or whatever date was given, "we'll get through this thing."

To those who read about these debates or read about these bills, make no mistake: This particular motion for closure this afternoon will pass because, after all, the government has the majority and they will see that it's done. And make no mistake that this bill in fact will pass, because again they have the majority and they will see that it is done.

What I can't quite understand, though, is that when this government comes forward and wants to speak about direct democracy, I have yet to know—and I could be corrected—that there was ever a referendum in this province that reduced the number of municipalities. I don't recall a referendum in the Chatham-Kent-Essex riding or in the Chatham-Kent area that asked the residents of that municipality whether they want to be amalgamated or not. I recall that when the city of Toronto in fact did hold a referendum, the government chose to ignore it. I don't know why then we would assume that this government would listen to anything Bill 62 may have to offer to us.

But when it passes and when it becomes law, let's suppose that in the area of Essex county and Windsor we hold a referendum. There isn't anything that affects the residents of my riding more than the attempt by the city of Windsor to take over an inordinate, significant part of Essex county. If this bill passes, I would suggest that what we would do in Essex county and in those seven municipalities is in fact have a referendum. You'll get a resounding no, that we don't want to be part of the city of Windsor, that a fair offer has been made by the county to the city, and that we think the minister, having had that

offer in his possession and having had the position of the city of Windsor in his possession, will say, "I think that's a fair offer." In fact, he could help us by avoiding the cost to the taxpayer of a referendum if the minister would make up his mind.

I also point out to those who may be interested that this referendum legislation limits referenda in municipalities to those issues that only affect the municipality, to the interests of the municipality. I've heard the Chair of Management Board suggest that now that they have, behind closed doors and unannounced, allowed casinos to be placed at racetracks, that will be, as the Chair of Management Board has said, put to a referendum. But the interesting thing there is that that is not just in the interests of the municipality; it's also in the interests of the province.

I point this out not to argue whether casinos should or should not be extended into the venue of racetracks. I don't argue that point. I only point out that a referendum held in a municipality in which a racetrack exists isn't only of interest to that municipality. The province has a huge stake in it because they take a whole bunch of money. It isn't all left in the municipality. In fact, if the government would come along and say, "Yes, we will leave all that money in the municipality. We will give all that money to charity. We don't want any of it," that might change the whole argument that surrounds some of those casinos in some of those municipalities.

I can recall a few years ago when the Premier said, when he was the leader of the third party, that the government of the day didn't have a revenue problem; they had a spending problem. Yet what do they do? They are now going to take in about \$2 billion a year in revenue from casinos across this province. To me it would indicate that there certainly is a revenue problem and that the government is solving that problem by taking a great deal of money through gambling in this province.

But to sum up in the limited time I have because of this closure motion, I only say that this bill speaks to democracy, but certainly the motion that we're dealing with this afternoon does not speak to democracy. In fact, it takes away from the democracy of this Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I had looked forward to participating in what I thought was going to be a full debate on Bill 62, which is really a follow-up from Bill 25, although the changes that have to be fixed from Bill 25 in this act are veiled behind a central piece which the government puts forward as referendum legislation. But here we are today and the government has decided again that it will use its majority to force a closure motion, to shut down debate, to in fact stop the opposition from its ability to expose this government's legislation and how shallow and how silly it really is. So I'll have to use this time in terms of condemning the closure motion as also the single ability I will have to speak to the bill itself.

1550

If you look at the bill, there are three important points that have to be made. First of all, the government uses the centrepiece, the referendum, as the reason behind bringing the bill forward in the first place. If you look at the referendum process, which my colleague from Trinity-Spadina will do in more detail than I, you really see that it is (a) undemocratic and (b) completely unworkable. It offers to municipalities an ability to talk to their citizens about important issues. But really, if you look at the face of it in the details in the bill, it provides nothing of the sort.

Second, it really is about the mess that has been left from Bill 25. You will know that Bill 25 was legislation that this government introduced in this House on December 6, which they rammed through this House before we rose last Christmas, to force restructuring in four areas: in Ottawa, Hamilton, Haldimand-Norfolk and in my own community of Sudbury. As this government is wont to do when it insists on rushing things, a whole bunch of mistakes were made; a whole bunch of things were left out. Really what Bill 62 is all about is using a good portion of the bill to fix the mistakes that have been made and that people have now picked up on.

Third, and most important for me as the representative of a community that is now undergoing a forced restructuring courtesy of this government, is the silence on issues of transition that flow from this bill. This bill is silent on two of the most significant issues that have flowed from Bill 25, and that's where I want to begin my remarks today.

The first has to do with who will pay for the cost of the transition not only in Sudbury, but in Hamilton, in Ottawa and in Haldimand-Norfolk. It's interesting that just after this bill was introduced on December 2, the minister did a telephone conference with a number of reporters in Sudbury, and he was asked that very question. We have a concern that taxpayers in our municipality are going to get handed the bill for a restructuring process that this government has forced on us. Tony Clement said to the Sudbury Star on December 7 that "the province won't say yet if it is prepared to pay the millions of dollars needed to create the new city.

"That is not part of the bill," municipal affairs minister Tony Clement said" as he unveiled this legislation.

He was asked for a timeline on when a decision would be made with respect to who pays for the transition costs in Sudbury and he could not provide a timeline for Sudbury or the other affected regions. "The government is still deliberating on the best way to approach those (costs)," the minister said.

"That will not form part of the legislation, but we will be dealing with that separately."

We are four months after the fact, we have a transition team that is underway, we have a restructuring process that has been forced on us that is underway and we still don't know who is going to pay the \$12-million costs that are associated with that forced restructuring. I point out that the \$12-million cost was estimated by the special

adviser, Mr Hugh Thomas. That was his estimate: \$12 million of transition costs over three years. But the city of Sudbury, for example, which has been a proponent of one tier, has put that cost closer to \$18 million. And the regional chair, Frank Mazzuca, has put that cost closer to \$18 million, based on work that staff of the region and of the city have done.

So we have somewhere between \$12 million and \$18 million of costs that no one wants to talk about, that this government doesn't want to deal with, that this legislation, which comes four months after this restructuring was forced on us, is silent on. Who will pay the costs of the transition that the Harris government has forced on Sudbury?

It's interesting because another proponent of restructuring was the chamber of commerce in Sudbury, but even the chamber of commerce said the following, and I quote the same article of December 7:

"It would be 'unconscionable' to expect local taxpayers to bear the burden of those costs, said Victor Skot, chairman of the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce.

"Since the province provided transition funds for restructuring in other communities, not paying the bill in Sudbury would be 'unfair and biased' and would demonstrate 'partiality and inequity' by the government, Skot said."

I don't agree all the time with what the Sudbury Chamber of Commerce has to say, but I agree with them in this case. It would be a clear case of inequity if the government didn't fund the costs related to the transition, between \$12 million and \$18 million, whatever that final cost ends up being.

What's interesting is I don't think this government has any intention whatsoever of funding the transition costs in Sudbury. I say that for two reasons: First, because the delay in making a decision has gone so long. If the government were interested in providing those costs to us and somehow softening the blow of the forced restructuring that we now have to go through, then at the time the legislation was put forward the government would have also made an announcement that it intended to pay the costs, as in fairness it should do, since it's this government forcing the restructuring on us. That hasn't happened. That leads me to think the government has no intention of paying those costs.

The second reason that I believe the government has no intention of paying these costs comes from Bill 25 itself, and when I spoke on Bill 25 last fall, I pointed this out as well. There is a provision that this government specifically put in Bill 25 that would force the city to pick up these costs. If you look at clause 36(3)(a), it says:

"A regulation under clause (2)(c) may provide, for example,

"(a) that the city may undertake long-term borrowing to pay for operational expenditures on transitional costs, as defined in the regulation, subject to such conditions and restrictions as may be prescribed."

You see, I think it's already in the bill and what the government's going to do—I'm just not sure when

they're going to do it—is say to the city of Sudbury, "Thank you very much, but your taxpayers are going to have to pick up the between \$12 million and \$18 million of transition costs that we're foisting upon you."

I think that is horribly unfair and discriminates horribly against my community and the three others that were affected by Bill 25. I say that because I contrast what the government has done in my community with what the government did in the city of Toronto when it forced the amalgamation in Toronto through Bill 103. What's interesting is that the government picked up a good portion of the transition costs that were associated with the megacity through Bill 103. I've got a press release dated January 5, 1998, that was put out by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It says:

"Province Confirms Toronto Transition Support

"The province confirmed that it will provide the city of Toronto with a \$100-million interest-free loan this year. Additional financing of up to \$100 million, also interest-free, could be available next year if it is needed. ... The city must commit to repay the loan over three years beginning in the fiscal year 2000-01. Final payment will be due by March 31, 2003."

It also says, "The province will provide up to \$50 million in additional, non-refundable financial assistance"—code word for a grant—"for transportation and communications projects to be undertaken by the new amalgamated city of Toronto." It seems to me that if this government was prepared to force amalgamation in Toronto and was prepared to pay a significant portion of that in the form of a grant and then was prepared to deal with it by providing a loan, then the Harris government should do the same thing in the other communities where it's forcing restructuring.

I say that particularly because just last week the task forces that are dealing with the restructuring in Sudbury came forward with respect to the cost of policing and the cost of firefighting. Isn't it interesting that they are noting that it's going to cost an additional \$2.2 million for the city of greater Sudbury to have police in all of the areas that now have to be covered in the new city. It says this was largely an unforeseen expense, as no one expected Hugh Thomas, the provincial adviser on municipal restructuring, to expand the boundaries of the city of greater Sudbury to include six unorganized townships with about 1,200 people. As a result of the boundary changes that affect the unorganized area, we now have a serious expenditure in policing costs that no one seemed to know about, that wasn't anticipated in the \$12-million transition costs that Mr Thomas talked about. In fact, in order to provide the communications services, the city of greater Sudbury is now going to have to build three radio towers, at a cost of about \$1.2 million, to bring radio coverage to those unorganized areas so that police can communicate effectively in those areas. The committee said the following:

"Establishing communications capacity would be a significant cost of restructuring. Communications is an officer safety issue. The first criteria for police communi-

cation is the capacity to securely receive and send information and to receive and ask for detail or clarity. This requires the communication system be capable of broadcast and reception throughout the whole area policed."

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Not only are we affected with respect to police; the same report pointed out that communications is now emerging as a costly issue with the fire department. There are currently seven local fire departments in the region, and all use different radio frequencies and equipment. They can't even talk with one another on their radios.

So then the article lists all of the new additional costs to pay for portable radios, truck radios, on and on. We now have a new \$2.2-million additional cost just for communications for police and for fire departments that Hugh Thomas never thought about and that this government hasn't dealt with. Surely if the government could give the city of Toronto \$50 million for transportation and communications, then this same government should start to deal with the communications problem that we're starting to identify.

There is nothing fair about the city of Sudbury paying all of the transition costs associated with the restructuring that has been forced on us by this government, especially if you look at what this government did in Chatham-Kent and what this government did in the city of Toronto.

It's also horribly unfair that the taxpayers in our region have to pick up the costs of the transition team. This was also forced on us when Bill 25 was passed last Christmas. If you compare that to what happened in Bill 103, you will see that this government, the Harris government, picked up the costs of the transition team, the expert advice that had to be hired and any of the facilities that had to be rented. But in Bill 25, the citizens of the regional municipality of Sudbury have to pick up that cost, and we ask, why? Why that discrepancy? Why that discrimination? Clearly, in Bill 103, you just have to look through the legislation and you will see that these costs were picked up by this government, not only for the transition team but for the financial advisory board as well.

The legislation states in Bill 103, section 13, that there will be a financial advisory committee, it will be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and that the remuneration shall be fixed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and all "reasonable expenses incurred in the course of their duties" picked up. It says the same thing in the legislation with respect to the transition team, and it goes further and says that both the financial advisory board and the transition team, if they needed to hire staff, arrange for facilities, obtain expert advice, would have all of those costs covered too.

Those costs were covered in a memorandum of understanding that was written on April 23, 1997, and finally signed in August 1997, an agreement between the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the transition team. In that memorandum of understanding, which I have a copy of, under the section of financial arrangements, it says,

"Funding requirements of the team"—that's the transition team—"will be recorded in the annual appropriations for the ministry." In section 3.2: "A budget of \$3.5 million has been approved for the operation of the transition team. Any revisions to this budget will require prior approval by the minister and Management Board." In fact, there was a revision. At the end of the day, this government, the Harris government, paid \$3.8 million for the operation of the transition team and the financial advisory board in the new city of Toronto. They paid that cost.

But when you go to the city of Sudbury and the legislation which affects us in Bill 25, it says, under section 27:

"(1) The regional municipality of Sudbury shall pay the expenses of the transition board for 2000, in the amounts and at the times specified by the transition board.

"(2) The transition board shall give the council of the regional municipality an estimate of its expenses and the regional municipality shall include them in its operating budget for the year 2000.

"(3) The expenses of the transition board include the remuneration and expenses" of the members.

It gets better than that, because not only do we have to pay their costs for the whole time they operate in the year 2000, but, if they operate after January 31, 2001, as they can do, according to Bill 25, then the new city of Sudbury has to pay for those costs too. In Bill 25, under section 17, it says, "The city shall pay the expenses of the transition board for 2001, in the amounts and at the times specified by the transition board."

There is no fairness in having Sudbury regional taxpayers pick up the costs of the compensation for the transition team, for any expert advice they hire and any facilities they lease when this government, with respect to Toronto, paid those costs. There is no excuse for that. There is no reason for that. There is no legitimate reason why we are stuck with that bill, why our taxpayers in the regional municipality of Sudbury are stuck with that bill, when in the city of Toronto that cost was covered, \$3.8 million of it, entirely by this government. Yet here we are in Bill 62, which is supposed to be about restructuring and other things—in fact what it does is really fix the mess that comes from Bill 25—and the government has nothing to say about why they are quite happy to discriminate against municipalities where they are forcing restructuring, why they were quite happy to pay \$3.8 million, which was the cost of the transition team and financial advisory board in the city of Toronto amalgamation, and why they have forced the regional taxpayers in Sudbury to pick up the costs of the transition team and related expenses as well. There's nothing fair, nothing just about it, and the government should have included in Bill 62 a repeal of the section which forces that cost upon us and a section whereby those costs would have been paid by this government.

I said earlier that the bill is also about how we hide the mess that was created by Bill 25 because the government

was in such a rush to get things done that they had any number of mistakes that they are now trying to clean up in this bill. If you look at the bill, over half of it, all of part I and a good half of part II, has nothing to do with referendum at all but has everything to do with all of the technical changes, all the things that have to be fixed because of the mistakes that were made. If you look through it, you see that all of the roles that should have been clarified in Bill 25 now have to be clarified in Bill 62, because the government forgot to do that in Bill 25. They were in such a hurry to ram it through without any public hearings, they made a whole host of mistakes that they're trying to fix now. I suspect that's why they've got the piece of referendum that they're trying to focus on as the central piece so that people won't know the mess that was really created and how this bill is about fixing it all.

What's interesting, in part I at least, is that there is a provision for two new councillors in the city of Hamilton and one new councillor in the city of Ottawa. I oppose that as well, because what that does is allow the government to fix some problems in Conservative ridings that they hold. In Sudbury, there's no change in the number of councillors. The provision that's on the table now, the proposal that's on the books right now, is for 12 part-time councillors, two per six wards, to look after a new city that will have a population of 163,000 people. Yet the government sees fit in this bill to give a few more seats to help some of its Conservative members in Ottawa, to give a few more seats and make some changes in Hamilton to help some of its friends there too. That was one of the reasons I opposed Bill 25, because the government has used pieces of it to help some of their friends and at the same time in ridings that they don't hold the government says, "Whatever prevails will prevail, and we're not interested in hearing whether or not 12 people working part-time can adequately represent people who live in the greater region of Sudbury."

What's interesting in part II of the bill are those two very significant areas that those of us on this side of the House really objected to in Bill 25, and that has to do with the change to the Municipal Act that the government made in Bill 25 which allowed 75 electors in a municipality to come forward to the government with a restructuring commission, and the government would have, under Bill 25, actually allowed that restructuring commission to sit. What it allowed in a municipality, for people who were democratically elected, was for an end-run of a group of folks who didn't like what the municipalities had to say. A particular group who had a special interest in seeing amalgamation forced could do an end-run around the legitimately elected, accountable politicians, go to the minister with a restructuring commission and the minister would have, under Bill 25, ordered that to be done—75 people in a municipality with the capacity to do an end-run around the legitimately elected council. Thank goodness the government has finally seen the error of its ways and is repealing that, changing that in this particular bill.

The other change they're making—and again this is not part of the government's focus, because they're trying to focus on the referendum piece of that to divert attention away from the mess they made of Bill 25. The second area and the second very obnoxious change that was made in Bill 25 had to do with what we call the Henry VIII clause, which was a clause, essentially, that gave enormous powers to this cabinet to make changes and never have to come back to the Legislative Assembly to have those changes occur. So the particular change that they're making very quietly in this bill is to repeal the section that allowed for the Lieutenant Governor in council to make regulations providing for consequential amendments to any act that in the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor in council are necessary for the effective implementation of the act.

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I think they probably figured out that they were erring on the wrong side of most of the constitutional experts in this province, who had taken the government to task, indeed chastised this government, with respect to the new, additional powers the government was taking on itself through this section. I remember when we did the debate on Bill 25, I quoted Ed Morgan from the University of Toronto law faculty, expert in constitutional law, who said of the section that the government is now repealing: "The cabinet is not above the law. This says the cabinet is the law."

We had another expert, Joseph Magnet, who is a constitutional expert and teaches law at the University of Ottawa, who said that if the bill was passed in this form, "the Legislature may itself be acting illegally by unconstitutionally delegating to the cabinet its authority to make laws."

Finally, we had a third constitutional expert, David Elliott, who teaches at Carleton law faculty, who called this section "astounding and extraordinary."

I guess the government finally decided they had gone too far with respect to this section, that indeed they were grabbing too much power and not allowing the rest of the elected members in this place to ever have a say and are using this bill to try and change that. They're doing it again quietly, trying to have the centrepiece as the referendum while they put in a number of the changes that they have been forced to make behind the scenes.

In conclusion, let me say that really the bill is a smokescreen to hide the mess that came with Bill 25 because the government was in such a rush and didn't have any public hearings when they rammed it through before last Christmas. It's also a bill that I can't support because it's silent on the some of the issues that are so critical to people in Sudbury, who are now forced to deal with this forced restructuring, particularly who will deal with the transition costs, the between \$12 million and \$18 million of transitional costs that this government is foisting upon us, and why is it that regional taxpayers in our area have to pay for the cost of the transition team when this government in Toronto picked up \$3.8 million of those costs itself.

I regret that the government has to move to this time allocation motion today. I'm not surprised. It's reflective of what they did on Bill 25 when they shut down debate. No doubt we will be here in the next session with another bill fixing the mistakes that flow from both Bill 25 and Bill 62.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's an honour to rise in this House and speak on the time allocation motion put forward by the honourable member. During the past week we have had many members speak to this bill, and it's now time that we move on to other important pieces of legislation. That is why I am in support of the honourable member's motion.

Bill 62, the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, is another important step in strengthening the democratic system of our province. If this House passes the bill, it will provide a legal framework for voters to have a say in local decisions. The bill will also address some of the concerns that have arisen in the process of municipal restructuring. Yes, there may have been some mistakes made but, for example, we are eliminating the legislation that would allow 75 residents to petition a request to the commissioner. I believe that's an important piece of legislation up in my area as well.

I'm going to direct most of my time this afternoon to talking specifically on the referendum sections of this bill because they are of great interest to the people in my riding of Simcoe North.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): For that jail.

Mr Dunlop: Exactly. The Mike Harris government thinks it is very important for governments to actually listen to the concerns of taxpayers. For this reason, just recently I was very fortunate to be part of the Premier's Task Force on Rural Economic Renewal in Ontario. We had 120 deputations in 14 separate municipalities and attended over 20 separate meetings. We listened to the concerns of the people in rural Ontario. It was very interesting to listen to municipal politicians throughout the province and how well they have adjusted to the local services realignment. The concerns we hear from the opposite side are always negative. The fact of the matter is that municipal politicians have done a very good job on this.

An important way to ensure that governments are held accountable is through direct democracy. I'd like to take this time to commend the minister for bringing forward this important piece of legislation. I know that the minister has worked long and hard to bring more direct democracy to our political system. Referendums are important for a thriving democracy because they strengthen the credibility of the political system in the eyes of the public.

Pollsters, journalists such as Peter Newman and scholars such as historian Michael Bliss have noted that Canadians today are generally cynical about politicians and politics in general. Actually, this is very important because I think in the past they've had too many governments, from all levels, particularly federal and provincial, that have made promises and haven't kept them.

That's something our government is very proud of. They tend to believe that the political system is not responsive to their needs and that all too often politicians pursue their own interests in the eyes of the public. I feel that by increasing the control voters exercise over their politicians, popular confidence in democratic politics can be expanded and enhanced by giving more people a say in the process.

I also believe that referenda campaigns can serve to educate the public about policy issues that are important. It is no secret that any referenda campaigns invariably generate a great deal of publicity, including extensive media debates. As well, voters are likely to receive material directly from the yes and no campaigns, and that's fair. Thus voters will be provided with innumerable opportunities to inform themselves about the merits of the issues in question before they vote. Such opportunities for popular education of the citizenry do not occur when policy decisions are decided by council alone.

Referenda are an important tool for holding politicians accountable. If governments know that their decisions may be subjected to a popular vote, they'll be more sensitive to public opinion when formulating policies.

Under the current system, municipalities can ask their voters questions but they don't have to listen to them. Under this legislation, if 50% or more of the eligible voters show up at the polls and vote either yes or no to a question put forward on the ballot, the municipality must act on it. It is very important to note that a binding question cannot take away an existing right such as the right to appeal certain council decisions to the Ontario Municipal Board or to a court.

As things stand now, municipalities can ask all sorts of questions, some of them politically motivated, and they are not bound in any way by the results. In recent elections, many municipalities have asked questions about matters over which they have no jurisdiction to implement. The voter response to such a question is entirely meaningless if the municipality can't do anything about it. Of course, maybe that's human nature, where we have this rapid desire to make comments about other areas of jurisdiction and make our views known in areas where we really have no control.

The government believes that if a municipality can't do anything about a particular issue then there's no point in putting that question on the ballot, and, I might add, at great expense. That's a waste of taxpayer time and money. Municipalities will only be permitted to hold referendums about issues that fall within their jurisdiction to implement.

Direct democracy is not a new concept for this government. In fact, this government has led the fight for participatory democracy and has imposed these types of processes on us because we understand that the people should have more of a say in the way a government works, especially in the areas of raising taxes.

Last fall we introduced and passed the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act—which I believe was supported by our friends from the Liberal side—which

protects hard-working, Ontario families from irresponsible government spending that results in deficits and accumulating debt. Voter approval is now required before introducing a new tax or raising a wide variety of taxes, including personal income tax, corporate taxes, retail sales tax, employer health tax, gasoline and fuel tax, and education property tax.

This bold concept rests with a simple principle: If governments want to take more money from the people of this province, governments will actually have to ask them for it. Just ask what happened if the former provincial Liberal or NDP governments imposed such a measure. Obviously they were too busy raising taxes to think about who ultimately pays for them. But then again, the Leader of the Opposition opposes the very idea of direct democracy, as he told Robert Fisher on Focus Ontario in 1997. "I'm not a big fan of referenda" is what he said then; two years later he signed a pledge to "pass taxpayer protection legislation within the first 100 days, making any increases in existing tax rates or new taxes subject to approval by voters in a binding referendum." But unlike the legislation that we introduced and passed, he would have raised taxes and then asked the people of this fair province. It's kind of like the weather in my hometown of Coldwater in November: If you don't like Mr McGuinty's opinion, just wait five minutes and it will change.

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I would like to say a few words on the intention of this bill. In the 1999 election, I was given the enormous honour of being elected to represent the people of Simcoe North. I know that every person in this House understands the enormous pride and pleasure you get when you are chosen to represent your family, friends and communities in this magnificent building. I, like many of us in this House, recognize that the democracy system which we have does work. It gets frustrating from time to time—you seem overwhelmed by the magnitude of things and the issues that you have to deal with—but I think it's incumbent upon all of us that we stay committed to this cause, that we don't lose sight of the objectives: that we are representing our residents; that we do want better democracy; that we do want more accountability. I feel that by passing this legislation we're moving one more step towards that goal of continuing to enhance and expand democracy in our province.

I hope the members of this House can support this time allocation motion so that we can give the municipalities the option of putting a binding referendum question on this year's municipal election ballot.

Mr Bradley: The bill of course does exactly the opposite to enhancing democracy. It restricts democracy in this province because it gives the Minister of Municipal Affairs or, probably more importantly, some back-room whiz kid the opportunity to approve any item, any question that would go on a ballot. So any thought that this is enhancing democracy—as this government always does when it comes to dealing with democracy, it's shrinking democracy.

I am wondering what the people who are running the Grantham High School reunion would think of this. The Grantham High School reunion in St Catharines is being held, as you might know, Mr Speaker, on Friday, May 19 and Saturday, May 20 of this year. The reason that it's interesting to you is that the former member for Perth was a graduate of Grantham High School—actually, she ran against me for president of the student council at that time—and she was your predecessor, Karen Haslam. I know you would want everyone to know that if people want to get information on the Grantham High School reunion, which is being held on the long weekend in May, they can access the computer at www.Grantham-2000.com. That's how you access it.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member from Rexdale knows that I enjoy computers very much and that I'm right up to date on Web sites and so on.

I encourage all those who were at Grantham—and perhaps you can pass the message along to Ms Haslam—to participate in this Grantham High School reunion once again. I even invite the member from Rexdale. A former staffer of his, Dallas Saunders, attended Grantham High School as well and will no doubt be back for that event.

I want to say as well—I heard the member for Nickel Belt speak about the merger taking place up there—I'm having more and more people ask me about the book *Merger Mania* by Dr Andrew Sancton of the University of Western Ontario. Everyone is asking for this book now. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has it. It's Dr Andrew Sancton.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): He's an American.

Mr Bradley: No, he's a Canadian. He's at the University of Western Ontario.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Etobicoke North, come to order.

Mr Bradley: Because they may be into your territory soon, Mr Speaker, the name of the book is *Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government*. I know that many of the people in Mitchell will be very concerned about the potential for wiping Mitchell out completely and simply having one big region in your area. I know you wouldn't let that happen. Dr Sancton indicates all the reasons why you shouldn't.

I should say to members of the House that there's a strange thing happening in Niagara. The left wing and the right wing are lining up together in favour of a merger—one big region. The left wing are under the misimpression that somehow they're going to have more influence on the 16 or 17 Conservatives who will be elected to the regional council because of course you have to have a lot of money to run, therefore people of modest means would have a difficult time getting elected to a regional council, whereas now they could have access at the ward level to the ward councillors because it doesn't cost as much to run in those elections.

Dr Sancton points out four things: number one, that you don't save money with these mergers. In fact, it often costs more money.

The second thing he points out is that you don't have to speak with one big voice in your so-called region to be successful. If you look at some of the places in the States that compete with us, like Boston—greater Boston has numerous municipalities; greater Los Angeles. Think of all the US cities. They have many, many municipalities within them, and that does not prevent people from going to invest in those areas.

Third, even within a region, when municipalities compete with one another, often business likes that. They like people who are going to compete with one another for their business.

Fourth, he is insulted by this talk show appeal to people of saying we need fewer politicians because that's where all the expense is. Of course, that's where the least expense is; that's where the most access is. Indeed, many members of this Legislature over the years were elected at the local level where people had the greatest access to them.

So I certainly recommend Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government, by Dr Andrew Sancton to anybody who is concerned about a huge mega-city coming to their area of the province. The member for Cumberland, the former mayor of Gloucester, will be interested in this, I'm sure, because they're having a merger in his particular area.

I also want to say that here we are back into yet another time allocation motion. Those are nice words for a closure motion that chokes off debate in this Legislature. The previous speaker from Simcoe North talked about enhancing democracy, but time after time this government has done something to diminish democracy.

I want to diverge a bit. I was watching PBS, the Public Broadcasting System, the other night. They had an excellent program—

Mr Hastings: That's an American network.

Mr Bradley: Let me explain for those who are barking from the other side why I would do so. If you want to understand this government, you have to look at what they're doing in the United States and then you understand where these people are getting their ideas.

I want to start out by saying I don't want you to be offended by the person's name I mention, because there's one significant difference. I watched the three-hour biography, if you will, of George Wallace. There was one significant difference between this government and George Wallace. This government is not racist. George Wallace was racist in his politics.

I was just jotting down, as I was watching it—it reminded me so much of the people to whom this government has appealed. George Wallace talked an awful lot about law and order to stir up the troops. Second, the dangers of big government; he appealed to the people who didn't like—what did he call them?—the pointy-headed pinko professors in Washington; in other words, anti-academic, anti those people who would believe in

liberal arts education. I don't mean that in a political sense.

The enemy was the federal government. When he found out that race didn't work for him any more he went after the federal government, and the federal government was the enemy for him. He talked about the Supreme Court and how the Supreme Court was handcuffing what the police wanted to do in his country. I'm just showing you the themes that George Wallace talked about.

"What do you like about George Wallace?" they asked some of the folks in Alabama. They said: "We like the fact that he talks common sense. He talks in terms everybody understands, simple and straightforward terms." It reminded me very much of what I've seen happen in this province, with one very big difference, as I say, and that is he appealed to race; this government does not appeal to race. That's a significant difference to note. But I think people should see that program just to see how that appeal went out.

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The second part was Burning the Woods, I think. The first was The Politics of Rage, something like that, and it really reminded me of how you play those hot-button issues to such an extent. Play them very simplistically and you can be successful, because people don't always have time to think of the intricacies of the issues. That reminds me of this bill.

One thing I must give you great credit for over there—I like to give people on the other side credit once in a while—is for your ability to spin-doctor, that is, to put out a message that may be totally contrary to the facts. I turned on my radio this morning to the 7 o'clock local news and it said: "Ernie Eves is going to bring in the first balanced budget in 30 years." Well, I just about fell off my chair when I heard that, because I well remembered, by looking in the legislative library, by listening to minister after minister of finance and by looking at the figures provided by the Provincial Auditor that in fact the last balanced budget in this province—\$90 million in surplus—was in 1989.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): What happened to it?

Mr Bradley: No, no, you're thinking of 1990.

Where I want to give you credit is that apparently you've spun that well. I expect at the National Post, no matter what you say, that's going to be gospel. I understand that. They're busy trying to get Tom Long elected—and the Toronto Sun. I saw in the Toronto Sun that it was accepted. Except that where you have been successful—I saw some others who've bought into this nonsense. Now, I don't mind you saying that you've done a good job and the others didn't do a good job. That's politics. But this is simply factually incorrect, and yet you've spun it to an extent that you've fooled some people out there.

I'll give you credit, as I say. I guess as a politician you sit back and say the other side is good at getting a message out. Well, that is a very superior way of doing it, but

it is not true. Nevertheless, I just want to give you some credit once in a while, because I don't often do it.

The second thing is I want to give the Premier credit for something. When he came to St Catharines, I said to him, "Let's get ready; let's get that big mega-city going," and the Premier said: "We're not ready to do it yet. We're not prepared to impose it at this point in time."

I thought that was fine for the Premier to say that. We had some local people attacking him. There I was; I had to defend the Premier in that particular instance because he wasn't moving ahead quickly. He had obviously seen the problems he created in Wentworth-Burlington and Stoney Creek and places like that with the folks there so he did not want to proceed quickly. But I wanted to give him credit in that particular instance.

I also want to talk about the cultural clubs. How does that fit into this, you ask? Well, it's a time allocation motion. You want to choke off debate on everything and I've only got two and half minutes to complete this. The cultural clubs, such as the Canadian Polish Society, the Ukrainian Black Sea Hall, Club Roma, Club Heidelberg, just to mention a few in St Catharines, have found themselves with their property taxes doubled and tripled as a result of change in a memo, an interpretative memorandum sent out by the Ministry of Finance through the Ministry of Revenue that simply says, "What used to be treated as residential is now treated as commercial." I encourage all of you to look this up and get it changed.

Now, some of the municipalities—I heard one particular mayor get up and say: "Oh, we're going to solve this problem. I talked to the minister at the fundraiser." Well, thank you very much. You people have talked to the minister too. That doesn't solve a lot of things. What you have to do is go to the top. So I went to Ernie Eves, the provincial Treasurer, who is almost the top, at least.

I think all that has to be done is a change in the interpretative memo that simply says it shall revert to the way it was in 1998, that they shall be considered residential; cultural clubs, which are non-profit and contribute so much to our society, should be changed. I think my friend from Kitchener probably would agree with me because he's got some great cultural clubs in his area. He had a wonderful group of people of German descent down on the special day he had when his bill was before the House. So I urge you people to go back and put some pressure on the government to do this. I think Mr Eves would probably be prepared to do this simply with an interpretative memo. If it took a piece of legislation in this House to do it—I don't think it does, but if it took it—I'm sure that would go through quickly in this House without a time allocation motion such as we're facing today.

The last thing I want to say is that with the budget coming up tomorrow you've got a decision. You can either put the money into a tax cut or you can put the money into health care, public transit and other things like that; and also devote it to debt reduction, because I used to hear my chamber of commerce and my taxpayers coalition, when the NDP was in power, say, "The debt is

out of hand." You people have added \$21 billion to the debt since you've been in power. I think you should address the debt. I'm for addressing it in a meaningful way, instead of giving away more tax cuts. You've given your tax cuts already; you should get your credit for that. Now I have to relinquish my time.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It gives me great pleasure to take part in the debate on the time allocation motion. As we got elected last June 3 and came into this House, it was a great honour for me because I am a new member and I learn and listen. I realized that the government of Ontario was made up of 58 members running this great province of ours. Then I realized that the city of Toronto is also being governed, so-called, by 58 members, and that didn't make sense. I said, "Such a city, 58 members, and the whole government of Ontario—big plans—and still only 58 members," and my thinking was that perhaps something should be done about that. And lo and behold, something is being done. I personally don't think they've gone far enough, but we'll leave it at that for now.

On the time allocation motion that we're discussing today, a lot of times the members opposite feel, or at least they say, we're cutting back the debate. At the same time as people at home listen to the debate going on, a lot of the time, in fact more often than not, members opposite are not on track. They're talking about some other things which are never on the actual subject. I'd like to encourage the people at home to watch and see which side of the House stays on track, stays on the message.

Our government is committed to furthering democratic representation in Ontario. Let me give you some of the background facts as to why we're discussing this issue, Bill 62, the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act. On August 27, 1996, the government released a discussion paper outlining alternatives for using referendums in Ontario. Public hearings on the discussion paper were held in the fall of 1996. A lot of times members opposite say there was no public input. Let me assure you for the record that based on what the committee heard from the public they recommended that legislation be introduced that would allow province-wide referendums.

In March 1998, Mr Clement, a great member from Brampton South at that time, and now Brampton West-Mississauga, a colleague of mine—I am one of the three Bramptonian team members and I'm very honoured to be that—toured the province to listen to Ontarians' views on referendums and on draft referendum legislation. He heard that although Ontarians liked the idea of direct democracy, many were nervous about having widespread referendums in Ontario. Therefore, the government has begun to introduce referendum rules through our Taxpayer Protection Act rather than proceeding immediately with a broader initiative. Voters in the last election agreed with Premier Harris's commitment to empower citizens through local initiatives as they re-elected our government with a second majority.

Like Premier Harris and Minister Clement, I believe that governments need to be more accountable to taxpayers. Referendums can be useful tools in achieving this goal. That is why I strongly support this bill.

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Looking back, our party has been the leading voice for citizen initiatives in Ontario. In 1996, our government released a discussion paper outlining alternatives for using referendums. Based on our open dialogue with Ontarians, legislation was introduced that would allow province-wide referendums. This was a victory for many people who for too long have felt left out of the democratic decision-making process. One would suspect that the opposition would welcome such a move, but we were surprised when Mr McGuinty boldly told Ontario's voters that "you just don't need referendum legislation." Thankfully, the Premier ignored Mr McGuinty, as he should have, and chose instead to listen to the average, hard-working Ontarian.

On December 14, 1998, Premier Harris introduced Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act. A key component of this legislation is the requirement for voter approval prior to the provincial government raising existing taxes or introducing a new tax. This is a novel concept in Ontario and only the beginning of our commitment to returning government to the people from whose authority it emanates.

While the average Ontarian rejoices, what do you suppose was the preferred Liberal solution to empowering Ontario voters? Let me share with you another quote from Mr McGuinty. He said, "The reason politicians are elected is to make decisions on the people's behalf." Arguing as the Liberals do that politicians, not taxpayers, should have the final say in hiking taxes is much like saying that the fox should be in charge of the henhouse.

Bill 62 is an extension of our commitment to grassroots democracy. Under the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, 2000, Ontario voters will be empowered to bring about binding changes at the municipal level of government when they vote. Bill 62 restores power to local voters to ensure that municipal councils respond to their needs. It prevents local politicians from irresponsibly hiking their taxes and destroying the small business sector which creates local jobs. If this bill is passed, municipal voters will be able to insist on better representation and, if they so desire, lower taxes. By setting a fair minimum level of voter turnout of 50%, Bill 62 makes certain that referendum results truly reflect the opinion and priorities of the public at large.

We as a government have been unrelentingly harsh against special interests that hijack majority rule. Unlike the opposition, this government is on the side of the quiet majority who do not wave placards and signs, who do not chain themselves to barriers or block traffic. We support the people to decide their future.

The lost years of Peterson and Rae, between 1987 and 1995, are only now being repaired. During that time, municipal affairs were sometimes abused and sometimes neglected. We in the government take seriously our

responsibility to oversee and guide municipal development. Under our stewardship, the ongoing neglect of municipal government of the Peterson and Rae years has been reversed. Municipalities have been streamlined and in some instances amalgamated to reflect the changing reality of Ontario demographics.

Let me be clear. It is our government which respects and trusts the voters to determine what is in their best interests. It is the opposition who believe that government always knows best. I am glad that we disagree on this most important point. Through Bill 62 we are again demonstrating that we are as committed as ever to working with our municipal counterparts to ensure that Ontario remains the best place in the world to live, work and raise a family. Now I'm going to get into some specifics, even though the members opposite tend to go away from the points.

The Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, 2000, would permit municipalities to ask clear, concise, yes-or-no referendum questions about issues that fall within their jurisdictions. That's very important: their jurisdictions. If at least 50% of the eligible electors vote on the issue, the results would be binding.

The legislation is being introduced to bring new accountability to the referendum process. By linking the scope of questions to the appropriate authority and making the results binding, the legislation would help prevent the ineffective use of referendums and waste of taxpayers' money.

"More direct democracy in the form of referendums has been a consistent government commitment since the 1995 provincial election," Minister Clement said. "The province led the fight for participatory government and has imposed these types of processes on itself as well."

Subject to approval in the Legislature, the province would establish rules relating to a question on a municipal ballot and with sufficient voter turnout would make the results of such a question binding on local councils. At present, municipalities can put any questions within their jurisdiction on the municipal ballot, but the results of these questions at present are not binding. Under the proposed legislation, upper-tier and local councils could ask questions relating to matters that fall within their jurisdiction. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing could continue to place non-binding questions on municipal ballots. If the minister wanted to test local opinion on a municipal matter, the province would cover the cost of notifying the public, which makes up the major part of the cost.

Under the proposed legislation, the question must deal with matters within the jurisdiction of the municipality. The question must be phrased to result in a yes-or-no answer. The question must be clear and concise. The language must be unbiased, and there is a requirement for full and accurate disclosure to electors of the impacts of implementing or not approving the proposal, including financial impacts. The results of questions could not deny other rights, for example the right to appeal.

I know the time is running short. Therefore I am asking and urging all members, including members opposite, to join with me in supporting this bill to increase participatory democracy in Ontario.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): It's sad to stand here again. Here we go again: time allocation. It's just amazing, when you look at the record of this government and you talk about democracy. In the last session alone, last fall, nine of the 13 bills that were passed had to be pushed through, forced through, down people's throats through time allocation. I think that's a real disgrace and it's a sad day for democracy. You talk about democracy, that this bill is all about direct democracy, but how you're forcing it through has nothing to do with that. I'm elected by a democratic process but I feel that my rights as a democratically elected individual are stifled continually by this government when it comes to time allocation.

I appreciate the fact that the Minister of Municipal Affairs recognized some of his mistakes that he implemented in Bill 25. I think it's important to know that he, after the fact, listened to the people about taking out the provision of 75 electors bringing forth a commissioner and repealing that great Henry VIII clause. Gosh, I've never heard of something so ludicrous, that would have given that kind of power to cabinet to supersede provincial legislation.

1650

But what this government fails to recognize—and some of you on the other side surprise me, because you come from a municipal background. I'm really proud of the apprenticeship that I served at the municipal level. You need to recognize, and your government fails to recognize, the important role that municipal government plays in this province. You fail to recognize that the local governments are the hands-on politicians, the politicians who are most accessible to the public on a regular basis. You know too that those politicians at the municipal level are also democratically elected, but this legislation that you are proposing regarding referendums totally undermines the confidence that people have in their municipal politicians, their elected officials.

The previous speaker made reference to consultations. "Consultation" seems to be the buzzword of this government, but it's something they just pay lip service to. With this legislation, did you talk to the municipal politicians? No, you didn't. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario says, "We have yet to be convinced of the need for this legislation." You talk about how you want to develop partnerships, to work together, trying to bring us over to the dark side, to come over there. No, thank you, because it's obvious you don't listen to people. I think that's something you lose sight of as a government. Certainly something that I recognize at the municipal level, and I wish some of you would recognize too, is the importance of listening, of working with and developing partnerships with municipal officials, not ramming things down their throats.

It surprises me too to see the piecemeal changes that we are seeing when it comes to the Municipal Act. Last fall in the omnibus legislation, Bill 25, we again saw the lack of consultation, the lack of working with municipal politicians, going in and ramming through restructuring of municipalities. Here we are with Bill 62 in front of us, and again it's piecemeal change that's taking place to the Municipal Act. It's really a shame. The government has paid lip service—they have circulated papers and they have talked about this—but they haven't taken action. I urge the Minister of Municipal Affairs to listen to what the municipal politicians and the municipal organizations in this province are saying, that instead of dealing with changes to the Municipal Act on a piecemeal basis—I would just recall another one.

The member for Stoney Creek, in his private member's business last week, talked about changes that needed to be made within the Municipal Act. Instead of doing these things on an ad hoc basis, why don't you sit down with the municipalities and the municipal organizations and take the right approach, which is taking a serious look at the Municipal Act and overhauling the Municipal Act to ensure that we have a piece of legislation that is going to serve the citizens of this province for the 21st century?

The province needs to think about how it works with municipalities and the relationship it has with municipalities. One way the government could make great strides in the partnership at the municipal level—I've used this analogy before and I am going to use it again, because it's something that bothered me at the municipal government level. Municipalities in this country kind of look at things like a three-storey outhouse. On the top floor of this great outhouse that we've got in this province is the federal government, the middle storey of this outhouse is the provincial government, and on the bottom floor are the local politicians and the local citizens. Municipal politicians constantly feel like they are being dumped on, and I think you on the other side need to change that attitude towards municipalities.

Back to the legislation that's in front of us today: The member made reference to the question that is going to be placed on this referendum paper, but what's extremely troubling to the municipal politicians in this province is, when is the minister going to define, make the definition of what item is of a provincial interest? That's not been clearly made and that's a real mistake.

The other aspect of this legislation that I chuckle over is this question of 50% turnout. We're going to have to see a dramatic change in voter participation at the municipal level. I'd like to thank Peter Leack, the city clerk for St Thomas, who provided me with some interesting statistics. In 17 elections that have taken place in the city of St Thomas since 1960, only four of those elections had a better than 50% turnout. Of that, two of those elections just crossed that 50% barrier.

The province again has failed the people of Ontario again.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): You're so negative.

Mr Peters: I'll come to that. Again, they go and draft legislation without consultation. This is not a democratic piece of legislation. This is more like a dictatorial piece of legislation that's been put in and is going to be rammed down the throats of the municipal politicians in this province.

The consultation: The government's going to say, "We've talked to some municipal politicians and we're going to consult." My understanding is that it's going to be public hearings: one day, one place—Toronto. Well, there's a heck of a lot more to this province of Ontario than the city of Toronto. It's a real disgrace that you're not taking this consultation, these public hearings out so that you can get input from all the people of this province. It's kind of interesting too—you talk about municipal referendums. You look at the municipal referendum that took place in the city of Toronto—whether they wanted to be amalgamated or not—an overwhelming no towards that amalgamation vote but did the province listen to the people? No, the province didn't listen to the people, and that's a real shame.

I want to wrap up with some comments because you say that you've consulted with the municipal politicians and that the municipal politicians are on side with this. I can tell you that the municipal politicians aren't on side with this. This is a news release from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario: "AMO President Michael Power said, 'Credibility, accountability and consistency and the wise use of taxpayer's dollars cannot be achieved by this legislation if we cannot clarify for the public and ourselves what is within the municipal jurisdiction. If this to be on a case-by-case basis as the minister has stated, then there will be greater confusion and frustration for the public and the two orders of government.'"

"There is an overwhelming need to complete the job of setting out what is a provincial versus a municipal government responsibility. 'We have been trying to convince the province that this work is critical,' said Michael Power, 'Today's announcement makes this even more urgent. Otherwise, the province has created another piece of legislation that appears to bring it a number of unintended impacts.' In the absence of clarity and where overlap of responsibility exists, then the province must be similarly bound by a municipal referendum outcome, and must do everything within its powers to implement the results of the question. ..."

"Municipal government leads all orders of government in terms of direct access, openness and accountability. At the municipal level, public consultation is carried out as good practice."

It's very obvious that this government doesn't follow that practice.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's always a pleasure to have a few moments to be able to speak to some of the—

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): You've got 18 minutes.

Mr Marchese: A mere 18 minutes?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Yes.

Mr Marchese: Look how thick this thing is. It's a thick bill. How much can you cover in 18 minutes? Well, we have to start somewhere. They moved closure today. Why would they move closure on a bill that is their pride and joy? You would think that they would want to be able to sit through this as long as they possibly could. Why now? Why? Because direct democracy is something that you want to be able to sell to the public, don't you? Well then, extend the period that—

Hon Mr Stockwell: You always want more time.

Mr Marchese: You're much taller than I am, Stockwell. I wish I could be as tall as you are. It would make such a big difference in this place. I'll do a Stockwell later, if I can, but at the moment I have to focus. I only have 17 minutes.

If this is your pride and joy, we need more time in this place to debate. You wanted more time, Monsieur Stockwell, when you were here. We gave you loads of time to debate. Do you remember that? You were happy. You were like a fly in—I don't want to say it.

1700

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: I can't say it, because this present Speaker in the chair stops me for every word that isn't sanitized. Like a fly in—you get the picture.

So a bill, the pride and joy of this government—what do we get? Closure. And then what do we get? One afternoon of clause-by-clause. Now, to you good people of Ontario, what does "clause-by-clause" mean? It means nothing. What it means here is we get two hours and it's out of the way; it's gone, kicked out.

Why would they do that? Why would this government do that? My feeling is they would want to talk to the public and say: "Look, good public, we're giving you power. Because this is something important to us, we want to spend a whole lot of time doing it and telling you about it." But they're not doing that. Why? Because the bill doesn't do what it says or they say it should do. That's the problem. The titles of these bills always belie the substance contained therein.

It reads as follows: "An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts," muchos acts, as you can see, "in order to encourage direct democracy," so all these changes in here are designed to encourage direct democracy, and I'll speak to that in a moment, but isn't that risible—let me make it simpler: laughable—"through municipal referendums, to provide additional tools"—remember that, tools?—"to assist restructuring municipalities and to deal with other municipal matters."

The point of this is that the substance belies the title.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Get closer to your mike.

Mr Marchese: I like to move around, Monsieur Stockwell, mon ami, mon cher.

You'll recall the other day when we were dealing with the Parental Responsibility Act. The Parental Responsibility Act was another jewel for these guys, a law-and-order kind of bill, right? What did they give us after

closure, meaning ending the debate, pushing debate out this door? Two little afternoons. We're likely to get the minister to come and "blah, blah, blah" for a whole hour, then another "blah, blah, blah" through questions of the individual—a whole waste of one day—and then we've got one more day left to debate the substance of the pride and joy, the crown jewel, the Parental Responsibility Act, that act which deals with law and order.

It's a smoke-and-mirrors kind of politics, placebo politics. You know what "placebo" means, right? When you go to the doctor, they give you a sugar pill; it's called a placebo. Then they give another group the real medicine and they test out whether the real medicine works or the placebo works. That's what this government is offering us: not the substance of a cure, but placebo politics. It's all designed to make the population beguiled, to appear as if you're getting something that they are not giving you. But the way this government operates is, "Does it make you feel good, general public of Ontario?" If the answer is yes, that's all they want. They get one hit from the media the first day and then they move on, because they don't want the general public to read—God bless, I wish that they would read, and wish that some of them could read, because if they read the substance of most of these bills, they would find it's empty on that.

There's so much more to say; I'll move on.

You'll recall, Speaker—oh, you weren't there. I went to the press conference of mon ami Monsieur Clement, and do you know what? The first part of it says, "An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in order to encourage direct democracy." All these amendments Monsieur Clement didn't speak about. Not once did he say, "There are a whole lot of amendments we want to make to a previous bill that will encourage us to do" whatever. Not once did the minister speak about all these changes contained in Bill 62. Why? Because he's hiding his incompetence, not just his but the government's incompetence, in dealing with municipal matters.

Do you understand what I'm saying, good public of Ontario? I'm saying that these incompetent types produce bills and produce laws that later have to be changed by other bills because not only didn't they take the time to do it right, but because they don't know what they're doing. The sad thing is that the public doesn't know and so surreptitiously—meaning like reptiles creeping under the carpet—they introduce changes that the public is oblivious to. The good public over there is oblivious to this and the good public watching this doesn't have a clue. The government relies on the public's ignorance to be able to do its malodorous work.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Malodorous?

Mr Marchese: Malodorous.

My friend from Nickel Belt touched upon some of the changes that had to be made in Bill 25 in order to be able to correct it, and it's contained in this Bill 62—lots of pages, as you can see. It was the Henry VIII clauses, the clauses that gave the government, the cabinet, power to be able to do what they wanted. When they probably

realized the absurdity of it, they said: "We'd better change it, but let's not tell people. We'll just change it and simply talk about referenda. Why bore the good citizens of Ontario with all this detail and the incompetence of the government? We might as well just tell them what we think they need."

So what do we offer them? Referenda.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You guys are smart. So they say to the good public of Ontario, "We're going to give you direct democracy," because it's a good Alliance kind of direct democracy principle, a Conservative-Reform-Alliance principle, direct democracy. It's an evolutionary kind of name. It's like a moving target. "What do you want today? We're going to sell it to you soon, and if it doesn't work, we're going to change it again." You guys are good.

On the referendum it says—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Monsieur Beaubien, écoutez une seconde.

For a referendum to be binding, the turnout must be at least 50% of the electorate—people who vote, people who can vote—and at least 50% plus one must vote in favour. Does the good public of Ontario realize how absurd that is? Does the good public—the taxpayers—know that I don't recall in the history of this country any municipality where we had a turnout of 50% of the electorate? Let's just admit there might have been one.

Hon Mr Stockwell: St Thomas—

Mr Marchese: Bring out the facts in your speech.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You weren't listening.

Mr Marchese: I'm going to listen to you, M. Stockwell, when you come around.

Fifty per cent of the electorate has got to go and vote, and then 50% of that plus one in order for this, whatever issue, to be binding. I'll speak to that in a second.

Hon Mr Stockwell: What should the number be?

Mr Marchese: No, it's just risible. But let me go on.

For example, the new city of Toronto had a turnout of 45.65% in 1997—a big turnout for Toronto; a highly politicized public in the city of Toronto, wouldn't you say? This was for an election with a hotly contested mayoralty race. You remember Mr Lastman, Barbara Hall, two good candidates angry about the amalgamation that you people forced on the city of Toronto, that this legislation would not be able to deal with because amalgamation is not part of the power that is given to it. Because of the forced amalgamation, 46% of the population, more or less, turned out in a hotly contested mayoralty race.

1710

So I say to you, are we ever going to have 50% of the electorate voting? According to history in my memory—perhaps there are greater Conservative minds on the other side, but I doubt it. Give me a whole list. Historically, in this province—and if you say "one, two, three, four," it's a problemo. Why? Because it should be, in the majority of cases, that 50% of the population votes, as opposed to,

in a slim minority of cases, where a few municipalities will vote, for whatever reason, in their municipalities, and probably a very small—

Hon Mr Stockwell: What's the number?

Mr Marchese: I'm not in government. "You got the wheels," Mr Stockwell used to say. It's not what I say; it's what you say that counts. So I ask you to determine what you think the good politics is, but I'm telling you, the public doesn't have direct democracy because the majority of Ontario's population in municipalities don't go to vote with that kind of plurality—50%, right?

So what have you given to the public? You give them affectation about this; you give them some quackery; you give them some contrivance; you give them some pettifoggery; some skulduggery; some artful piece of—

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: That's all you give them. Give them something that's real, instead of saying, "Does it feel good?" "Yeah." "That's all you need to know." "Is there any substance?" "No; it's irrelevant." "Is there any evidence to prove this will work?" "It's irrelevant." Evidence, with this Conservative government, has nothing to do with placebo politics. "We just give them what they want."

Mr Long—I'm looking forward to him, because Monsieur Long is not a man of substance that I can see. The few things he's talking about are, "We've got to cut bureaucracy"—these Tories have done that; "We've got to give more tax cuts"—holy God, the province has been ruined by the tax cuts. Wait until the next recession comes. Holy God, you guys have no money to deal with a recession. You've frittered it away. You've given it away to people who have deep pockets, your buddies. We're going to have big problems down the line that Monsieur Long won't know how to handle, that fine American friend of mine. He should go back to the US and deal with that kind of dirty politics over there. But we have to wait for him to do that.

I remember the minister, Monsieur Clement, when he came to the press conference. He talked about, "The public, the voters will have a stronger voice." Oh yeah? "There will be increased municipal accountability." Oh yeah? Municipalities are going to be restricted in terms of the kinds of questions they'll be able to put to a referendum. The province will decide jurisdictional issues, so as soon as a municipality steps out of their potential power, the province comes in and says, "Uh-uh. You can't do that."

When he was asked, "What about amalgamations," the answer he gave was, "Oh, that's hypothetical." Funny, hey? It was "hypothetical." It was clear that it was a jurisdictional issue and that the municipality wouldn't be able to ask it, or that the cities previously couldn't hold that municipal referendum they had, but he said, "Oh, that's hypothetical." He doesn't even have the courage to say, "That couldn't be an issue that could be raised, because it's beyond the jurisdiction of the municipality." Amalgamation. Surely they should be able to do that, but

they can't. Mr Clement didn't even have the courage to say, "You can't do it."

The only thing the chief electoral officer will have a say in is if the question is vague or unclear. But jurisdictional stuff, the big boys with the power of fiat will determine that, as usual, the Henry VIII kind of clauses that appear and disappear according to the whims of this government.

By the way, in terms of direct democracy, the public will not be able to initiate referenda. Isn't that direct democracy? According to the ideological-pathological views of this Conservative government, it is. Direct democracy means the public will have the power to be able to initiate referenda. With Bill 62, the public won't be able to do that, so how is that direct democracy? How is that empowering citizens? Well, it isn't. It says to municipalities, "You will be able to hold referenda," which they can do now, "but only as circumscribed by poor little wee provincial Premier and cabinet caucus, who will decide what's good for any city here in Ontario." They decide that. It's risible, Monsieur le Président, this whole affair.

So you wonder, what can municipalities do? Perhaps deal with licensing peanut vendors. That would be a good way. I'm sure that half the population of Toronto would love to deal with the licensing of peanut vendors and the like, because that's the kind of power they're giving municipalities—no power to the people, some power to municipalities, limited, truncated, because the province decides what jurisdictional powers cities have. The poor cities can't even decide what is important to them. "Could we deal with downloading?" "Uh-uh." "Why not?" "Because we say so. It's a Henry VIII kind of power. It's absolute. You can't because we say so." But why is downloading not a municipal issue when this government sucks money away from municipalities and they don't have the power to say, "We want to deal with that"? What does it mean? What kind of power do we have, Madame Ecker? What kind of power do they have? Speak after me, please. I want to hear from you, Madame Ecker.

This bill is a sham. It's pathological, it's affectation, it's quackery, it's contrived, it's pettifoggery, skulduggery, it's artful, anything but real politics. I want to hear from the public. I hope they let me know what they think about this.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'd like to, just for a moment, as I begin my presentation, respond to some of the comments made by the member for Trinity-Spadina. I expect that he supported the social contract, and he's the one who's standing here telling us about democracy when they broke every single contract in Ontario; every negotiated deal that was here with your union, your supporters, and you voted in favour to break it. Is that democracy? Is that the democratic process you were telling us about? I see from your smile and your head on your desk that you empathize with my comments. I won't rub it in any more. I feel sorry for you.

We're addressing Bill 62, the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, and I can tell you that if there's anything I can support it's referendums. That's really the basis of democracy, and the more referendum activity we can have, I believe, the better.

This bill is another step towards quality and efficiency for municipal governments, and certainly I'm all for them. Prior to our taking office, the big hue and cry around the riding was, "When are these education taxes ever going to stop going up?" We froze them at 0.46% of the assessment, then dropped them by some 10%, and they're going to go down further. That is helping our municipalities with their taxes and, with the tremendous drop in the cost of social services, almost 50% of our people who were on welfare in 1995 are now off it; in my riding it's more around 60%. Look at the dollars that are being saved for municipalities.

As we move with some of the restructuring we've been doing in Toronto, Chatham-Kent and other regions where restructuring has gone on, tremendous steps have gone forward. It was interesting, when I was in Kent with the task force on rural economic renewal that I'm chairing, and also in Wellington county, that two people, one in each municipality, came forward and said: "I'll tell you, did I ever struggle against restructuring. I fought it tooth and nail. Now, two years later, it's the best thing since sliced bread. Let me tell you what it did for us," and they went down the list of all the savings. They were just so happy that had in fact occurred. On the list goes, more recently, the restructuring that has taken place in Hamilton and Ottawa, certainly logical steps to move ahead.

The main goal of this bill is to promote direct democracy in local politics. There's no question certainly in my riding, in Toronto and I think in a lot of other areas that there has been an increasing demand for referenda. People are asking for this, and we need to recognize it, and that's exactly what this bill is going to do. With this bill, once it's passed, in the future a referendum will become binding provided that they vote in favour of it and at least 50% of the population comes out to vote.

1720

I think there has been a lot of confusion in the past between what is a referendum and what is a plebiscite. Of course a referendum is binding and a plebiscite is something that's a guiding direction. Unfortunately, that's been mixed up consistently. Even our federal government has mixed up those particular terms.

There is a requirement in the legislation that whatever is put on the referendum question will be implemented within 180 days. If they don't get 50%, then it will be guidance, considered more as a plebiscite, you might say.

One of the big problems we've had in the past when municipalities have tried to have a referendum was with the writing of the question and having it properly vetted. You can write a question where it doesn't matter how you answer it, you're going to be right, or, in how you answer another one, you're always going to be wrong.

It's very important how the question is written so that the answer, yes or no, is indeed very clear-cut.

I heard the member for Trinity-Spadina criticizing about it being within that jurisdiction. It makes so much sense to limit it to the jurisdiction where the vote is being taken. Why go spending money on areas that are not involved in your particular jurisdiction?

Moving right along, this bill is going to bring a lot of recognition to rural Ontario and give a stronger voice on municipal councils in rural Ontario. I can tell you that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture is very enthused and very interested and wants to see more support and more strength, more voice in the councils from rural Ontario. They should be very pleased with this particular bill. You take, for example, the city of Ottawa adding one more rural member on their council so that there's one from each of the constituent townships around Ottawa, and in Hamilton two more rural members are going to be on their council. That is really what we're talking about with a strong voice for rural Ontario to represent those rural issues that only the people from rural Ontario really understand and can carry forward. This government is recognizing the importance of rural Ontario in what's going on out there as we look at places like Hamilton and Ottawa adding those extra people to the council from rural Ontario. It is also interested in rural Ontario. The Premier recently appointed a Premier's Task Force on Rural Economic Renewal that is out there listening to the people of Ontario. I hope the report we put forward, the interim report to the Minister of Finance, will be reflected in the budget tomorrow.

A little closer to home, some of the things that have been going on in my riding as they relate to restructuring: the city of Quinte West, where some four municipalities have come together, with a tremendous number of financial advantages for that community. They are two years down the road, and in a moment I'll bring some of those to your attention. Also in the last election, Campbellford-Seymour came together. I remember about a month and a half after the last municipal election being at an annual meeting of their fair board. The mayor spoke and then the reeve spoke. Each of them had been in their respective municipalities before, and now they were combined. They were saying: "Now we have two photocopiers, we have two fax machines. Look at the duplication that was going on." What did they do with that extra equipment? They gave it to some of the volunteer organizations in their community. That's the kind of advantage we are seeing with some of the restructuring that's going on in a small sort of way, such as in my municipality.

I want for a moment to give you an example after two years of what's been going on in the city of Quinte West. These figures came out late last fall. They had record economic growth, had new building values totalling \$74 million, had seen 273 houses built, issued a total of 927 building permits, saved \$80,000 in audit services, saved \$299,000 in insurance premiums, saved \$800,000 by becoming a single-tier city, turned a pre-amalgamation deficit of \$1.7 million into a 1998 surplus of \$481,832,

improved the general reserves in reserve funds by \$4.4 million in 1998 and cut the pre-amalgamation long-term debt by \$1,707,000. They also cut the 1999 city budget by 13.7% or over \$3 million as compared to 1998. Those are some of the advantages that we're gaining in rural Ontario and across Ontario with the amalgamations.

I for one am very enthusiastic about this bill that has been brought forward, Bill 62, the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, and will be able to support this time allocation motion and be able to support this bill when it comes before the House.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I think it's an ironically titled bill, to put it politely—let's start off that way—the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, and what do we have? We have a time allocation motion today cutting off debate. Interesting concept. They talk about democracy and yet they are literally cutting off debate, forcing this through. Why are they doing that? Because it's another one of the pieces of legislation that this government continually moves through the Legislature as quickly as they can that are really about them maintaining and taking over more control and actually denying democracy to various parts of our province.

In terms of this legislation, it's particularly galling and quite extraordinary to have them call this act the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act when indeed it's very clear that what it's about is taking it away. The fact is, municipalities are under an extraordinary amount of pressure in this province. My colleague from Northumberland made reference to this providing a stronger voice to rural Ontarians. Indeed, it just simply takes it away. He made other references to the fact that people want to have this. That's not true as well. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has made it very clear that they do not believe this legislation is necessary. It's not timely, and they have a great number of problems with it.

But again what it really comes down to is that municipalities are under a lot of pressure. They are desperately trying to hang on by their teeth and by their fingernails to try to look after their citizens. There are a number of things the province continues to do—and downloading obviously is the best example—whereby they want to have a voice. They want to have some way to slow down the province. I think the province knows that is the case and there are a variety of referendums the municipalities themselves would very much like to bring forward; this province is absolutely going to be sure they don't.

Mr Clement, the minister, when he first introduced this, made reference to the fact that this would be a good device by which to make decisions on whether or not you're going to fund a local arena. It's an important issue in every community. But the fact is, when you look at the kinds of issues that are out there now, that municipalities would like to have an opportunity to ask their citizens about, this bill is quite precisely about denying that. So, they can dress it up any way they want.

I must admit I'm not as concerned as perhaps others are that 50% plus one of the electorate needs to vote. I think if the issue is one that is of great concern to a lot of people, then people will go out and vote. I recognize that the history is there. There's no question. There is usually not that kind of a turnout, but that concerns me less, although it has obviously been a factor, than the fact that it really cuts off an opportunity for people to express themselves on issues that are important.

The member for Northumberland made reference to, "Why waste your time or money on issues of provincial concern only?" That's simply insulting. This is a government that runs around and talks constantly about how there's only one taxpayer, but then they are going to choose the issues that the actual municipalities and the citizens should actually have some impact on. It's astonishing. There are so many examples of it that I could give, and obviously I don't have a great deal of time, but when I think as the transportation critic, the battles we fought over the privatization of road maintenance in this province, a couple of things become very clear. One, the privatization—and the auditor has confirmed this—is ultimately going to cost the taxpayers of this province a great deal more money. Many municipalities across the province made very strong reference to the fact that they had grave concerns about it.

1730

My point is, for those who may choose to heckle me, a number of municipalities were very concerned about this issue. It affected them a great deal. A lot of people lost their lives on the highways this year, and I won't stand here and say it was caused as a result of that. All I'm saying is that the concern about road maintenance is a great one in this province. It seems very clear that ultimately road maintenance will cost us, the taxpayers, more money, and there is some compelling evidence as well that it may not be that the roads are being maintained as safely. That being the case, what I'm suggesting is perhaps a municipality might want to ask their citizens about that. Well, that certainly wouldn't be an opportunity that would be allowed under this.

As long as you've got a government that says, "We'll determine what the referendum will be," it is not direct democracy. It is not allowing more democracy; it is withholding it.

There are situations developing across this province, and again, in my community—and my colleague from Brant will relate to this—in terms of private jails. We know what's happening in Penetang. We know what's happening there. The fact is that in Thunder Bay right now there is a possibility—they keep hanging out this carrot—that indeed there may be a great big new jail in Thunder Bay. What is of great concern to a lot of us is that we do not want this to be a private jail. The evidence is overwhelming that this is a very bad move to make in terms of the safety of everyone concerned, the whole system basically thrown into disarray. If the people of Thunder Bay wanted to do a referendum on that, I would suggest this legislation will make sure they cannot do it.

To have the government members stand here and try and talk about the fact that this increases democracy, and to read their script, is simply unbelievable. The fact is it's very clear what this legislation is all about. This legislation is about making sure that the municipalities do not interfere in matters the government wants to simply bring their iron hand down on. That's what this bill is all about.

There are so many areas where—and we are going to be seeing a lot more as time goes on, I fear. We look at the downloading exercise, and I look at the situation, also in my riding, which is the issue related to the amalgamation of four communities and many unorganized communities in Beardmore, Geraldton, Longlac and Nakina with Caramat and Jellicoe. The ruling has come down that the community of Greenstone will now be in place. There's a lot of issues associated with this, but one of my concerns that I continue to express, certainly to my constituents, is what is amalgamating Greenstone really about? Is it perhaps about the fact that now the province will have an opportunity to download all the secondary highways to the municipality at great cost, and potentially Highway 11 itself? I sure would like some assurance that's not going to happen.

But I'll tell you something else: It would be nice if there could be a referendum, if the municipality would have the opportunity to at least ask the people whether they want this to happen or not. That's not going to happen. No matter what the government tells me, that they will give them a certain amount of money to look after it, we know that down the road—excuse the expression—it's going to cost more, and that means it's going to be another attack on municipalities. So it continues to alarm me.

There are other issues that relate to municipalities that I think are very clearly putting more and more pressure on the municipalities to actually be able to maintain the services to people, issues that they indeed may want to ask their constituents about through a referendum. Well, they're not going to be able to do it.

No matter how you colour this, I think it just simply ends up being a piece of legislation that ultimately is being put in place—one, as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario made clear, it's legislation they do not support. They do not need it. They do not think it's timely, and it's of no particular benefit to them. Some of the aspects of referendums which they thought would have been reasonably positive are being removed.

Two, the fact is that the government has made it very clear that they are going to have complete control over what the referendum questions would be. The issue has been brought up about the 50% plus one. As I expressed earlier, I'm not as concerned with that, although it is also a number that may be very difficult to attain. But again, it ultimately comes back to the fact that municipalities are being deprived of democracy through this legislation as far as I'm concerned. To try and paint it any other way—although, as we all know in the Legislature, there is a long history of legislation that goes forward with titles

that would appear to benefit the citizens of our province that I certainly would argue do not do so.

When you have a time allocation motion put forward on a piece of legislation that is called "direct democracy through municipal referendums," as I said at the beginning, it's ironic, but it's also kind of cruel. When you've got something out there that is not going to be of any benefit, that is going to take away the opportunities for people to actually have real democracy, that has to concern all of us.

I listened to the government members express themselves in terms of how they believe this will be of greater benefit to their citizens, and I tell you, I would sure like to ask them how and why they think that is the case. They have not been able to give me any real evidence that indeed this legislation itself is going to be of any real benefit other than to take away the opportunity for them to comment on issues such as, as has been discussed earlier, the forced amalgamation of Toronto back a couple of years ago, which you well know was a huge, major issue which was ignored by the government.

This ultimately appears to be nothing more than an attempt to control the agenda, to have all control out of the central government, something we're seeing more and more of. As we see more downloading, particularly those of us in the north, it concerns us enormously. We indeed want to have direct democracy; we want our citizens to have a chance to comment on these things. Obviously under this legislation, that will be taken away.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent to place an amendment to section 5 which would provide bilingual services where warranted in the new city of Ottawa.

The Acting Speaker: We're dealing with a time allocation motion here. It would be out of order. You could ask for consent at another time.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): I'll be sharing my time in this debate, the time allocation motion on Bill 62, Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act, with the member from Kitchener.

It's important to hear what we've heard from the Liberals. I'm assuming certainly that they are going to oppose this piece of legislation that gives direct democracy back to citizens. I suspect that.

What is the intent of this legislation? It would give Ontario voters a stronger voice in their local democratic process and increase municipal accountability. That's really what they're opposing; that's one of the things. If passed, the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act would provide a legal framework for voters to have a say in local decisions. That's again what they are opposing. They're opposing local voters having a say in local decisions.

The legislation would permit municipal councils to ask voters clear, concise, yes-or-no questions about issues that fall within the municipalities' jurisdictions.

Again, what are the Liberals opposing? Clear questions. Of course, we know that Liberals do not like to ask clear questions. That's certainly not new.

This is all part of what we have done as a province, because we've accepted legislation like that to control provincial governments. Last fall we introduced and passed the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, which protects Ontario families from irresponsible government spending that results in deficits and accumulating debt. Again, that was opposed.

When you bring that to the municipal level, we've accepted that, and voters from now on will have to approve any time there's any type of tax increase, whether it's personal income tax, corporate taxes, retail sales tax, employer health tax, gasoline and fuel taxes, or education.

So now we have municipalities that are going to be responsible to the citizens for all these things, a province that is responsible, yet we do not have a federal government that is responsible when it comes to any accountability to anybody. What we have is a federal government that has continued to increase taxes. They've cut transfers to our province for health care, and now we're receiving only 11% of the total cost of health care in Ontario. Yet there's \$3 billion in grant assistance going out to I don't know who. It certainly doesn't help the homeless people in our province. It certainly doesn't help the health care system in our province. It certainly doesn't help taxpayers who are raising families and have young children and need this money to feed and clothe their own families. But it's important, because Liberals have a very unique way of doing things.

1740

I want to go back to a Toronto Star quote back on September 14, 1990, shortly after Floyd Laughren took over the books from the Liberals, because the member for St Catharines talked about how they balanced the budget. Here's a quote from the Toronto Star:

"There's something strange with the speed with which the surplus became a deficit. The gap is not only in dollars. It's in credibility."

He was right. Of course, you know what that was all about. The Liberal government of the day claimed that somehow there was a surplus, and when Mr Laughren took over as finance minister he found out that there was a \$2-billion deficit.

The very same day, Bob Rae, September 14, 1990, Toronto Star:

"The fiscal projections for this year and future years are substantively different from the ones I've previously seen from the Liberal government. I intend to get to the bottom of this, of how and why the numbers that are being thrown around now are so different from the ones that were thrown in front of the public in July. The public has the right to know this information and to know that this is the legacy of the previous"—Liberal—"government."

So there was a clear leader, Premier Rae, and Floyd Laughren. They came in and were told that there was a

balanced budget and perhaps a surplus. In fact, there was a \$2-billion deficit. But that's the kind of balanced budget we've seen from Liberal governments across this country, where on one hand they talk about it having to be balanced.

But we need to go back to what's really important, because the Liberals have opposed all of the tax cuts in this province. Continually, on a day-to-day basis in this House, I hear Liberals talking about, "You should not have cut taxes; you should have done this"—

Interjections.

Mr Mazzilli: They don't get it. They're yelling over there. You know what? The debate is over. Tax cuts create jobs. You don't get it. The people of Ontario have seen that.

Let me tell you the results of those tax cuts. Ontario's economy has turned around since Mike Harris took office: 701,000 new jobs created; not only 701,000 new jobs created in this province but almost half a million people off welfare. You know what? These are people who had become desperate because there was no opportunity under Liberal-minded governments. They had to stay home and live off a system that they did not wish to live off, because there was no opportunity. Today half a million people are going to work in this province, and they have the dignity to come home and face their families, their children. Those people voted for the Mike Harris government because they now have a government that they're fully comfortable with.

It's important because it has come out from—I think the member for Trinity-Spadina talked about the leadership of Tom Long. I'll join in that debate about the leadership bid of Tom Long because it is an important debate. The member for Trinity-Spadina is probably disgusted with the federal Liberals, and he should be, because again no priorities, not in the area of health care, not in the area of tax cuts, not in the area of infrastructure. When you look at the gasoline taxes collected by the federal government, a very small percentage comes back to Ontario in the way of infrastructure for roads. As a result, we have the 401 completely upgraded with revenues from the provincial government, record numbers spent on the 401.

But you know what? We need to do more. We certainly need to get some federal government input. If not, they should not collect the taxes that are supposed to go to that system.

But again, I think Tom Long would certainly address a problem like that, where a government takes in money and doesn't give back Ontario's fair share. I'm sure he would, through his leadership, cut taxes and increase transfers to the provinces so that our aging population has access to very important medical procedures.

The little bit of time that I have left I will share with the member from Kitchener.

Mr Wettlaufer: The members of the opposition have asked why time allocation is necessary. I think it's very important to note that any time that time allocation is introduced, it's a very difficult time for the House leader

to figure out whether or not it is necessary. In this case, I think we have seen the level of debate, and that is why it's so necessary. We have issues that are very timely, and time is of the essence here. I would like to address some of these things.

One of the things that we're looking at, of course, is the region of Waterloo. We are providing for a directly elected council for the regional municipality of Waterloo, and to reduce the size of the local councils in my riding. Kitchener and Waterloo and some of the townships have requested a reduction in the size. This was in a letter that they wrote to the minister. Time is of the essence; we have to get on with this. This is why we are moving the time allocation motion.

Of course, it's not just the regional municipality of Waterloo. It's also the regional municipality of Halton. The chair has requested a vote on regional council matters. Time is of the essence on this as well.

We are enabling separated municipalities and counties that amalgamate to maintain their own different tax ratios. That is very important. We have, for instance—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mrs Cunningham has moved government notice of motion number 44. Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. It will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1748 to 1758.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Palladini, Al
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Snobelen, John
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFana, Carl	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan	Young, David
Guzzo, Garry J.	O'Toole, John	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Di Cocco, Caroline	Levac, David
Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	Marchese, Rosario
Bountrogianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	Martel, Shelley
Christopherson, David	Gravelle, Michael	McLeod, Lyn
Churley, Marilyn	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Conway, Sean G.	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Crozier, Bruce	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Curling, Alvin	Lankin, Frances	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 50; the nays are 23.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Agostino, Dominic (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Environnement
Bartolucci, Rick (L)	Sudbury	deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Beaubien, Marcel (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bountrogianni, Marie (L)	Hamilton Mountain	
Boyer, Claudette (L)	Ottawa-Vanier	
Bradley, James J. (L)	St Catharines	
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma-Manitoulin	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Bryant, Michael (L)	St Paul's	
Caplan, David (L)	Don Valley East / -Est	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC)	Oakville	Speaker / Président
Christopherson, David (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles
Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Broadview-Greenwood	chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Clark, Brad (PC)	Stoney Creek	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, assistant deputy government whip / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Cleary, John C. (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	
Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC)	Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coburn, Brian (PC)	Carleton-Gloucester	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Conway, Sean G. (L)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Cordiano, Joseph (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	
Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Curling, Alvin (L)	Scarborough-Rouge River	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
DeFaria, Carl (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	
Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Dombrowsky, Leona (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Duncan, Dwight (L)	Windsor-St Clair	opposition House leader / chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / -Nord	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC)	Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Elliott, Brenda (PC)	Guelph-Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation and minister responsible for seniors and women / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires civiles, de la Culture et des Loisirs et ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances
Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Galt, Doug (PC)	Northumberland	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Gerretsen, John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	
Gill, Raminder (PC)	Bramalea-Gore- Malton-Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	
Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora-Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC)	Nipissing	Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Hastings, John (PC)	Etobicoke North / -Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Transports
Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham-Kent Essex	
Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC)	Erie-Lincoln	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Johnson, Bert (PC)	Perth-Middlesex	Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président de la Chambre et Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Kells, Morley (PC)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	
Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Parkdale-High Park	
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Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / -Centre	
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / -Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	

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Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity-Spadina	
Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martin, Tony (ND)	Sault Ste Marie	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Maves, Bart (PC)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Mazzilli, Frank (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General / adjoint parlementaire au solliciteur général
McGuinty, Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / -Sud	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
McLeod, Lyn (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	
Molinari, Tina R. (PC)	Thornhill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / -Nord	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjointe suppléante du gouvernement
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey	
Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	
Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Durham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	
Peters, Steve (L)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Phillips, Gerry (L)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
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Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / -Ouest	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Smitherman, George (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	
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Spina, Joseph (PC)	Brampton Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme
Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Peterborough	
Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail

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Tilson, David (PC)	Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC)	Markham	Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC)	Don Valley West / -Ouest	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement
Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Wood, Bob (PC)	London West / -Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire au président du Conseil de gestion
Young, David (PC)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Finances
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First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

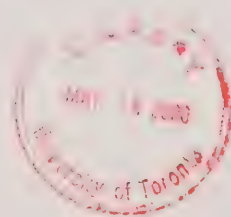
Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 1 May 2000

Lundi 1^{er} mai 2000



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Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} mai 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY), 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (INDUSTRIE DE LA CONSTRUCTION)

Mr Stockwell moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 in relation to the construction industry / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui a trait à l'industrie de la construction.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the Minister of Labour, Mr Stockwell.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Just to let you know early, Mr Speaker, I'll be splitting my time with myself.

I wanted to start out the day thanking two members of the opposition, the labour critics, for being here. I appreciate that. To get started on Bill 69, I need to get into a situation where I can lay the groundwork about where we were, where we've come from and how we've gotten to where we've gotten to today.

The bill itself has to do with a competitiveness issue. The competitiveness issue spans the entire construction industry in Ontario today. The competitiveness issue was an issue that I think needed to be addressed and it was probably the three parties involved, the general contractors in the province, the subcontractors and the union movement, who all agreed probably half a dozen years ago or so that there was a competitiveness problem within the union and unionized companies in the province with respect to getting tendered bid work in Ontario. The three parties came together over that period of time on three or four different occasions and tried to hammer out an agreement that would somehow allow unionized employers to become a little bit more competitive and allow them to bid more competitively on work.

Since they've tried to get together and create some solutions, and some of them have been like three and out—it's a bit of vernacular in the industry, but some of the solutions they've tried to work on over the years—there has been a progression, slowly but surely, of less and less work in the construction industry today moving

toward unionized employers, unions and unionized subcontractors. So before you get any further into this discussion on why this bill is before this House today, let us accept the fact, by all three parties, that everybody within the industry agreed there was a problem and they agreed that problem was exacerbating itself over time.

Where the thing kind of went off the rails was the solution to the problem, which is usually the case. The general contractors in the province of Ontario, the subcontractors in the province of Ontario and the unions in the province of Ontario couldn't seem to agree on what the best solution was that would enable unionized workers to bid more competitively on work. Having said that, there always was, or at least for the past six or seven years or so, an acceptance among those in the industry that there was a problem and that the problem needed to be dealt with.

When I got appointed as Minister of Labour, this was one of the issues facing this government and obviously the people of Ontario and this Legislature. In the throne speech, there was a commitment made to "modernize labour relations" and commit to a healthy and stable construction industry. The construction industry today entails \$26 billion this year alone. At \$26 billion, we're not talking something small time; we're talking a fairly substantial industry. We consulted with the parties in the industry and we kind of reached what we consider to be a reasoned and thoughtful and fair solution.

I noticed in the press clippings recently from the opposition parties that there was some opposition to our solution. All I can say to you is that by bringing the three groups together and negotiating this settlement, there seems to be acceptance from a large proportion of people involved in each of those three constituencies, more so in the union movement, and the subcontractors for sure. There also appears to be at least some level of commitment to try and make this particular solution work.

So let's examine the solution. Rather than pointing fingers about why we came to this solution and rather than concerning ourselves with whether or not this is a perfect scenario, let's examine the solution and those people who were involved in creating this solution. I think it would behoove this House at that point to endorse this piece of legislation, carry it forward and give it an opportunity to work.

First, there are two components of this bill, ICI, the industrial, commercial and institutional sector, and the residential component within that as well. There is a

residential component that deals with the greater Toronto area.

Let's deal with the residential component first. It was probably the least controversial of the two. It was embraced by more people unilaterally than the ICI sector. The residential component is simply this: In the greater Toronto area—and that excludes Durham; that's the way the homebuilders do it, that's where the bill applies. It doesn't include Durham. I don't know why. That's just the way it works. In 1998, there was about a five-month strike in the residential building sector, new home construction, in the greater Toronto area. There was a five-month strike not because one union went on strike for five months, but because there are about 20 to 25 unions within the residential sector, and the way they lined up over that five-month period in having two- or three-week strikes in each union created a domino effect. So when one union settled, the next one went on strike, ie, the drywallers would settle and the roofers would go on strike and then the framers would go on strike and then the plumbers would go on strike. So what you had was complete inertia when it came to residential building in the Toronto area for five months.

Many could say, "That's a union-management problem, and it should be solved and resolved among themselves." But the situation was that it wasn't that those particular issues weren't being resolved; the problem was how they were being resolved. It wasn't because those particular sectors were going on long, extended periods of strikes. What it came down to was that each trade would go on strike consecutively, thereby shutting an industry down for a year, when the longest strike would be two or three weeks, which made absolutely no sense to anybody.

The unions and the builders came together and they said to the government, "There has got to be a better solution to this," as the member for Durham East would know, "than simply having a consecutive, successive strike." So we sat down with the unions and the employers and the builders. What we reached I think was a fairly reasonable decision.

The reasonable decision was this: What would you do if you simply had a common expiration date to every contractual agreement? So of the 25 separate union affiliates that would negotiate with the builders, everybody would come due April 30 or May 1. Everybody would get the chance to go through the process of negotiating with their particular builders, but they would all expire on the same date rather than expiring consecutively. By expiring on the same date, ultimately, you've controlled the period of time when a strike would take place that would shut down and cripple an industry.

Who are the big losers? Not just the suppliers and the builders and the unions; the big losers are the people who end up buying the homes, making arrangements to move into a new home and finding out they can't do that for five months. That's a big problem for these people. By declaring this common expiration date, we gave the

employers and the unions the opportunity to work from one common date.

Then the parties came together and said to us, "Look, if we can declare one common expiration date, why can't we limit the period of strike?" I myself wasn't pushing for the unions to give up their right to strike. I wasn't telling the unions, "You've got to come to the table and accept this kind of negotiated settlement." The unions came forward in factions of large chunks—some with no strike period and some with as much as a 90-day strike window—and sat down and decided how long that strike window should be. By creating that strike window, they came to the conclusion, with the help of the ministry and the builders, that it should be a 45-day strike window. So we've created a piece of legislation, with agreement from the unions and the builders, that limits the strike window at 45 days. After the 45 days are up, they agree on a binding arbitration process and agree to an arbitrator between themselves and they go to binding arbitration. They go back to work on the 45th day.

I'm not really sure who could oppose this approach. I would be very surprised if the Liberals or the NDP would oppose this approach, simply because it was an approach that was adopted and accepted by the rank and file union executive duly elected by the membership. So they brought forward this recommendation adopted by the builders.

The residential component in this bill, in my opinion, is frankly a no-brainer. It's a proved piece of work. It's a proved piece of negotiation. It's a proved piece of compromise worked out by this government that's adopted by the community at large.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Where's your hat and cane?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Pardon? Hat and cane? Obviously, I missed that one. Sorry.

So this one seems to me to be a reasonable approach. I don't think there's a lot of opposition out there to the residential component of this legislation. If there is, I'll be very interested to hear the concerns across the floor.

If we go to the ICI component, I've got to tell you, that's much more complicated, much more difficult. The ICI component is basically this: They build industrial, commercial and institutional buildings around this province, and listen, it's big money. When you build a school or a hospital, you're in the millions and millions of dollars.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): Hundreds of millions.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Hundreds of millions, no doubt about it. I don't have to tell my folks across the floor that during the past decade the amount of work that the union membership were doing in the province of Ontario was getting smaller and smaller. In fact, I know hiring halls of 400 people were down to 50 people working. This isn't good. This isn't good for the employer; this isn't good for the union.

The problem became simply this: Late in the 1960s and early 1970s, a petition came before the government

of the day and they asked for what they call province-wide bargaining. Province-wide bargaining is simply this: All the unions from around the province get together and strike a deal with the employer community for three years. The rates set during that negotiation apply right across the province.

Now it would seem to me, if I've heard anything in this place in the last few years, particularly from the opposition benches, it was: "You have to understand that in this big province of ours of 11 million people, the concerns of people who live in certain parts of this province, like Sudbury, Hamilton and Sarnia, don't necessarily coincide with what happens in Toronto. We need an opportunity to create some kind of process that allows for negotiations to take in the sensitivities of a local community, a local neighbourhood."

But what was happening was, because we had province-wide bargaining, the level of dollars spent by the labour community was negotiated and settled at a Toronto rate. That rate in Toronto was not applicable to Sudbury, Sarnia and Hamilton in a lot of cases. What was becoming more and more obvious to most people was, as these rates went up and up during province-wide agreements, the work for a union member was going down and down. That was the dilemma we faced as a government. That was the dilemma that was accepted by the union rank and file. That was the dilemma accepted by the general and subcontractors out there as well. So we had to find a way to bring these people to the table and negotiate a different process that would allow for some flexibility in these negotiations so that dollars paid in Sarnia, Hamilton or Sudbury could reflect that community's economic situation. It was a fact of economic life.

Anyone who would oppose a change unilaterally, who was simply going to live with what was in place, in my opinion was slowly but surely watching the demise of the union construction movement in the province of Ontario. It certainly disappointed me to read in the paper the NDP's comments with respect to that. Simply put, they were going to fiddle while Rome burned. That to me was the most irresponsible approach you could take, fiddling while Rome burned, in essence simply because "This is the way we've done business since 1969 or 1970. We're not prepared to make any changes, regardless of how bad, inefficient and ineffective this process was." Their position is: "I don't care. That's the way my father did it and my grandfather did it. Even though there is no work, I'm not going to change the process."

We on this side of the House said: "No, we can't continue that way. We need to get the quality, unionized workers to work on these sites because they're well trained. They're good workers. We need to have them on the site but we can't get them on the site because the flat-out fact of life is they're not competitive." They couldn't compete. The tenders in some instances were 20%, 30% and 40% higher than the non-union tenders out there, and no employer could carry that baggage. Regardless of how

much you wanted to use a union worker, the incurred costs were repressive.

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So in our minds we decided that we had to get the groups together and discuss how we could go about doing this. I will say this about the union leadership: They canvassed their membership. During the negotiations, we met with up to 45 members of the executive of the unions across Ontario. There was not a union executive member who was shut out in this province. They can tell you, if they want, that they were, but every sector of this province was represented at that negotiating table. I know, because there were 45 union executive members in the Ministry of Labour's office at 400 University during the difficult times of this negotiation. They were fully informed, fully aware and fully active in the negotiating process.

Then the situation became, how do we do it? How do we get this difficult situation to the point that we can buy in union support with employer-community support and government legislation? There were three key components in the negotiation, and sometimes they got somewhat complicated, but here's what it came down to:

We need to amend the process to negotiate agreements in the ICI sector, meaning we have to get away from province-wide bargaining. We can't continue to allow Toronto to set the wage rates for the rest of the province, because it wasn't working. We had to deal with that issue.

We had to deal with what they call mobility and name hiring. In most contracts in Ontario, an employer may bid for the work but he doesn't get to pick any of the people who work on the site. This was counterproductive. In the electrical industry, for example, they were only picking one person. If you have 100 electricians on the site, you get to pick one person to go to that site. The rest come from a hiring process at the hiring hall. Employees were saying to us: "Look, we can't work under these conditions. We need some more stability. We need a cohesive unit. We need a travelling opportunity to create our own workforce." The crazy thing about it was this: They weren't saying to me or to the employers or to the unions, "We're not prepared to hire union people." They always said: "Yeah, we want the union workers. We just need the ability to take those union workers from areas that we know and understand and comprehend, and move them to other parts of the province." This was sacrosanct. This wasn't going to fly, apparently, for 20, 30, 40 years in this province.

The third key issue was key man. Key man and related employer. I'll come back to that as well.

Let's start out with the framework for amending ICI agreements. You understand that we have a province-wide agreement, negotiations take place, a three-year contract; once that three-year contract is signed, if a drywaller is making \$40 an hour in Toronto, they're paying that same drywaller \$40 an hour right across the province. We needed to create a system that reflected local initiatives.

What we came up with at the Ministry of Labour was this concept: We can have in the province-wide negotiations that the construction industry will retain that important right to strike. If they believe it's important enough to strike, they can still take their strike at the province-wide level. They can strike for as long and as hard as they want to strike. We didn't want to take that away. I know personally how important that is for a union to maintain and retain their right to strike. So we said, "That has to stay, that has to be in there." That was the first requirement that we insisted upon that was accepted by the employers.

But there needs to be an ability in a local board area—and I say "board area" because the province is cut into separate board areas—that if an employer needs some relief of the labour component in that province-wide agreement, they can try to negotiate a different agreement with the local union in that area. That became difficult. How is it that we allow a province-wide agreement to be struck but then allow secondary negotiations to take place?

Here's how we solved that problem: through co-operation with the unions. Once the province-wide agreement is signed—and that agreement is signed, as I said, with their unfettered right to strike—an employer group in any of the 28 board areas, roughly so, can apply to the local area—and the board areas, again, are broken out into separate areas. Let's take Sudbury for example. In Sudbury, they could apply to the local area and say: "Look, we have bid on the last 15 tendered contracts in this area, and in the last 15 tendered contracts in this area we have been at least 25% over when it comes to getting this bid. We're never going to win a contract. Union folks aren't going to be working. Union employers won't be winning jobs. Non-union is going to win everything. We need relief from the labour component of the collective agreement in order to win work."

That means that they apply to the local union executive, the EBA, and they negotiate a separate agreement for, as an example, Sudbury. During that process they have to apply and they've got 14 days to negotiate an agreement. Fourteen days means they can negotiate the agreement in the local area and come to an agreement. The unions can argue that you're not 40% over or 30% over, you're only 15% over, and the negotiations begin.

But what we needed at the ministry level was an ability to ensure that these negotiations weren't going to go on forever, and there can't be a strike component in, because that strike component had to exist at the provincial level. So we said, "After 14 days, if you don't have an agreement, the employer can apply for final offer selection, binding arbitration." That's code language meaning two people go to an arbitrator, they both put their offers in before the arbitrator, and the arbitrator can only pick one or the other. The complaint of the employer community was that they could never negotiate these kinds of deals. So after 14 days they can make the application to binding offer, final offer selection. They can still negotiate for another number of days until they

reach 35 days. If they still haven't reached an agreement after 35 days, that binding offer arbitration goes to the arbitrator. The arbitrator reads the submissions from the union and from the employer and decides whether it's 25% or 15% and awards a decision to the employer or to the union.

Now, what can be negotiated? The only thing that can be negotiated is the cost of labour. That's it. Nothing in the wording, nothing in the negotiation of the province-wide agreement, nothing out there can be negotiated. The only thing that can be negotiated in these local board areas is labour and anything that has to do with labour.

Let me tell you what that means, "anything that has to do with labour." Obviously, the rate that you pay—shift premiums is a good example. If you have shift premiums that are making you uncompetitive, you can negotiate that down. If you have vacation pay that makes you uncompetitive, you can negotiate that down. Sick benefits etc can be negotiated down. Anything with the cost of labour involved can be negotiated down, and that's through a negotiated process. The only way you can negotiate that down, as an employer, is to prove categorically that you're not competitive with the non-union sector within your board area. So it's a win-win. If you are competitive and you are doing business, then you have nothing to fear because the union is making money; the union employers are making money. They won't apply for relief. But if you are in an uncompetitive board area—and I don't want to single Sudbury out, but it's a good example—and you're not competitive, it seems to me, what's the point of being a union hall? What's the point in being a hiring hall with 400 employees and having 27 working? You may be paying them 40 bucks an hour but you've only got 27 of them on a site. Why wouldn't you pay them 32 bucks an hour and have 270 on a site?

The benefit there is, the union employer gets work. The bids are won, there are more union people working, there are more union people paying union dues and there are more people happy in that sector. And importantly for the province of Ontario, there's more competition for work, and ultimately more competition for work means better bids for the people who are looking for the jobs. In many cases, that's the good taxpaying public in the province of Ontario. That to me seems like a logical and reasoned and thoughtful approach. So that was the idea of the sectoral negotiations.

Now, there are some who are going to argue, and I heard this the other day, that somehow 1(4) is double-breasting. Let me see if I can give you a few other slogans: double-breasting; starting a non-union company with a union company; doing something for the employers that would allow them to get out of contractual agreements by simply forming another company. Many have said that this was the driving force behind bringing the unions to the table.

1910

Look, I can tell you this: There needed to be a solution to the problem. Now, if the argument they are using to

you is, "The only way you would have got this solution is because the unions were afraid that you were going to introduce 1(4)," I can't get into the unions' heads. Maybe that was their fear; I don't deny that may well have been their fear. I can't get into their heads. But the fact remains, folks, that in my opinion, for the union rank and file, for the union membership of the province, this was cod liver oil. This was the medicine that was going to make them better. Sure, it may not have been a situation they would have arrived at on their own, but staring down the realities of the situation, it is only but beneficial to them, but beneficial to the rank-and-file membership, but beneficial to the construction union movement in the province of Ontario.

So, no, I'm not going to stand here and pretend for a moment that there aren't people within this province who would like to see the abolition of 1(4). Yes, there are. Have they spoken to me? Yes, they have. Did they petition for the abolition of 1(4)? Yes, they did. Are there people in our caucus who would like to see that? Absolutely there are. But I've got to tell you, when I finished discussing this issue with these folks, I laid the particular plan on the table in front of them and asked them, "Considering the opportunity that's available," and this opportunity is the plan to make them more competitive in these board areas, "would you rather see this adopted and implemented and attempted, or do you want to see the abolition of 1(4)?" The overwhelming, resounding answer was, "Let's try the plan." I think, as do they, this plan has an opportunity to work. So that was the new idea as far as getting the idea out there that we need to create local bargaining.

Now, folks, I've got to tell you, if you argue against local bargaining, I can't keep your position straight any more. You're going to have to start supplying me with programs, because every time I talk to the Liberals and NDP, they keep telling me, "It's always a made-in-Toronto solution," and the minute we put legislation forward that doesn't have a made-in-Toronto solution, you're opposing it. So you're going to have to start giving me a program about what you're in favour of and what you're opposed to, because we're trying to facilitate this as a local community, local union solution, not a made-in-Toronto solution.

So we move further. That was the issue with respect to negotiations. Now we want to talk about mobility and name-hiring, and I'll get to that very directly.

How did we solve this problem where a contractor would bid on work and only be allowed to bring one worker with them? A hundred workers they could hire on the site, 100 people they could employ, and they could only choose one of that 100 to work on the site, just one, in the electrical area. It was counter to productivity. It didn't work.

So the issue became, how many people should we get to move? How many people should an employer be allowed to name to come with them from area to area? Take Sudbury and Sarnia, for example. If someone was bidding a job in Sudbury but was working in Sarnia, we

believed that of the 100 electricians on that site, by example, they should be allowed to bring 40 with them. Forty; that's it. Forty of the 100 workers would have to come from the Sarnia area. You want to know what else? All 40 of those folks have to be dues-paying union members. This wasn't any plot to subvert the union; this wasn't union-busting. Every one of these 40 they were taking with them was going to be a union member. They just happened to be union members in Sarnia as opposed to Sudbury, like that was some terrible thing.

Then we said that of the 60% that was left, they get to name-hire 60% of the rest of the constituency that they need to fill the jobs. So by mathematical calculation, 40% come. The balance, 60%, get named. What does that mean? I don't know why anyone on the other side could oppose this. What does that mean? That means that you go down to the hiring hall after you've bid the work, and if you need 60 people, you get to name-hire 36. That's all it means. So you go to the hiring hall and say, "I want your 36 best electricians." That's outrageous? They are still paying union dues. They are still living in Sudbury. They are still paying taxes in Sudbury. And now they'll be working in Sudbury. So they'll name-hire 36 of the 60 that are left, and at the end of it, 76% of that site gets to be chosen by the employer. I hate to repeat myself, but that same employer—every one of them is a rank-and-file, dues-paying union member. Of the 24% of the site that's left, the local hiring hall chooses who's next up on the list to go and work there. That's how controversial this is.

There wasn't any union-busting in this. There wasn't any Machiavellian plan to subvert the union movement in the province. We weren't setting the union movement back another 50 years, and if we did every time we were accused of that, we'd be in the 17th century about now. We were simply saying that as an employer—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You may be in the 17th century.

As an employer, you should have the right to choose 76 out of the 100 men or women who work on your site. That's it. But they have to be union, card-carrying people. That's all you get to do under the mobility and hiring hall clause, name-hiring clause. That's all. To the credit of the union, through tough negotiations and tough slugging and hard selling and much negotiation, they said, "OK, we agree." So here we have two components filled in: We have the local negotiated settlements agreed to by the union and we have the mobility and name-hiring negotiated and agreed to by the union. Now we were left with the key man situation.

The key man situation was more difficult. To get to the key man and related employer stuff, I've got to take you back. The key man and related employer provision within the act basically was put in to protect against someone who was operating a union company and didn't want to operate a union company any more simply walking across the street and opening up a company and calling it Joe Blow Electrical and not operating as a union company any more. That was that provision. The

Ontario Labour Relations Board, with the help of legislation from the government, decided: "No, you can't do that. If a union has come in and properly organized you and brought in a recommendation that said this was properly unionized, you can't simply subvert the law by crossing the street and opening up a business, shutting down your union and declaring yourself non-union."

Related employer or key person, or moving a key person out of your operation to do the same thing: What that criteria meant was that we had to make some changes to that law, because the difficulty was that just because someone is related to the owner doesn't make them a related employer. For instance, a father is operating an electrical company and the son is an electrician in that company. There are 200 employees in the company, but the son is simply an electrician. We don't think it's right that if that son wants to go out and open up an electrical company, he automatically becomes unionized simply because he's related to the person who owns the company with 200 people. We're not saying that they couldn't be a key person; all we're saying is that if you get to the Ontario Labour Relations Board, you can't just say, "They're related; therefore this person is automatically unionized."

The key person is another good example. Just because somebody holds a position with a company that's unionized doesn't necessarily mean that if they go and open a company they should automatically be unionized. If they're transferring assets, men and women, equipment, yes, then they should be unionized. But if they're simply going out to start a business, the Ontario Labour Relations Board and others could unilaterally say, "Since you worked for company A and you've opened company B that has no relation to company A, we declare you automatically unionized, company B, with no certification process." That wasn't fair. What needed to be put in the legislation was this: We needed to force the people who went to the Ontario Labour Relations Board to make the arguments. If there are arguments to be made that this person should be a related employer, then make them. It can't just be that they're related or that they worked for that person at some time in their life.

We spoke with the unions and they understand this. I think they understand it for the same reason I understand it. If you're going to have a day in court—and the Ontario Labour Relations Board is a quasi-judicial process—there has to be a more compelling argument involved in that than simply saying, "You're related." You need to put some facts on the table to make this argument clearly. That's what we've done. All we've said in the key man portfolio is that you just can't make the argument that blood relations and the person's position in that company should make it automatically a unionized operation.

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Those are the three key points, four if you want to count it: the residential portion in the city of Toronto; the framework for amending agreements locally; the

mobility in name hiring within an area by an employer; and key man-related employer.

Let me just discuss some broader points with respect to this negotiation process. I believe in my heart that Bill 69 is about fairness. I know there will be catcalls and attacks from the other side of the House, but I honestly and firmly believe that this is about fairness. Yes, it is taking some rights away from the unions; I don't deny it. It's not blowing the heads off the unions, not at all; it's taking some rights. There's no doubt it is, I don't deny it, but those unions were there at the table to negotiate the agreements and flexibility.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Take it or leave it.

Hon Mr Stockwell: The member for Brant says, "Take it or leave it." My friend, let me say this. The other option has always been the option that's been the case when we have all had office: the status quo, and the status quo was a relentless march to obscurity. The status quo was a consistent and continual approach that would have seen the abolition of unions within the construction sector in the province of Ontario within 10 years. The status quo was a continuing slide, an opportunity for someone who had a union card never to find union work again. The status quo was the consistent ability by non-union sectors within the construction industry to win contract after contract after contract because the union rank and file and subcontractors and general contractors were not competitive. They were losing work. I could show you study after study after study: They were losing work. The status quo was no option, unless you wanted to see the abolition of unions in construction in Ontario. That's the status quo.

You can argue till the cows come home that somehow the operation we entered into was less than honourable, but I'm telling you as a member of this Legislature, and I believe an honourable member of this Legislature, I went in with the idea of protecting the rank-and-file workers and builders and home buyers and the people of the province of Ontario. There was no Machiavellian approach, no subterranean plan to wipe out the unions. Let me tell you, my friends, if there were a plan to wipe out the unions of the province of Ontario, we would have done nothing, because they were going south, folks.

I know there'll be bluster from the other side, and I understand that there will be some bluster from over there, but I ask those members, point out to me statistically, show me where the union membership was gaining ground anywhere in this province. Show me where they were getting work. Show me where their job share was getting higher. Show me anyplace where hiring halls were where more men and women were working than 10 and 20 years ago. It wasn't happening. Looking at the status quo was letting Rome burn while you fiddled. That was the status quo.

If the biggest slam against this government and this ministry and this caucus is, "You took this issue, you dealt with it directly and honestly and you provided a solution that can potentially resolve this," then we stand accused. All the time I heard this, I heard from the NDP

opposite: "You're going to abolish 1(4). You're going to allow for double-breasting. The sky is falling. Watch Ontario slip and Toronto slip into Lake Ontario." The best they could come up with when we didn't abolish 1(4), when we brought in a recommendation endorsed by the union, was, "They only did this because you held a gun to their heads." That's bunk.

Mr Christopherson: That's true. That's the truth.

Hon Mr Stockwell: That's the fact according to an outdated, prehistoric, ideologically driven, self-centred party that is becoming more and more obsolete every day in this province. It's no surprise they're down to nine members when they're prepared to sit here and watch unions go out of business because of ideological pap. That's the fact.

Mr Christopherson: You're so caught up in being a cabinet minister, you've lost sight of reality. You're a puppet of Harris.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Hamilton West, come to order

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Please let me interfere with what's going on. I would like to welcome everybody this evening and we would like to have you stay in the chamber and participate in the debate. I wouldn't want to have it any other way, but if you force me, I will.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Labour.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It's very depressing to see the member for Hamilton West sitting here in his blustering, self-serving tones—"bitter" is the best word—bitter tones, because he had an opportunity to correct this situation and he did nothing. He was bent on ideological bafflebagg, caught in a time warp of the 1960s, where you'd prance down University saying, "You can't fire me because I'm part of the union." That's the kind of time warp he's caught in, that would allow rank-and-file members to lose their jobs in city after city in this province, so he could stand by this ideological time warp. He did nothing, but he was prepared to introduce social contract measures, abrogate every collective agreement in this province. But he wasn't prepared to look at a provincial agreement that could potentially save lots of union jobs, because it was ideology. That's what it came down to.

So he's left with this situation, and it's disturbingly difficult to watch. He can't find anything wrong with the legislation. He can't find anything wrong from the union rank and file. He can't find the union rank and file opposing the legislation, so what does he do? Rather than talk about the legislation and talk about the processes that have been implemented and talk about the negotiations and talk about the legislative necessity, he argues about the process. There's a dipper if I've ever seen one. Rather than looking at what happened, let's argue with how you got there. If the thing works, you're lucky. That's the approach he's taken. That wasn't the approach that we were prepared to take simply because we were caught in that situation.

So it is difficult. Sure, it is difficult when the kind of slanderous, ridiculous, self-serving comments come from the member for Hamilton West, left with nothing more than insults to members with respect to whether they are marching to whose drummer. That's what we're left with. The member for Hamilton West is reduced to shouting insults across the floor rather than talking about the legislation. I'll tell you why. It's because they're caught in that time warp, and it's shameful. It's shameful because you're supposed to be representing these people and the only person you're representing is yourself and your nine buddies over there.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Eight buddies. That's who you're representing. I tell the member for Hamilton West and I tell the rest of the members of this House, if that's who this government was representing, this isn't the kind of legislation we would have brought in. If we didn't believe in this, if we didn't think it was necessary, we wouldn't have brought this legislation in. Then the member for Hamilton West may have had a point, he may have had an argument, but he doesn't today, because we didn't do what he thought we would do and he's left arguing process rather than content. That's frightening. We're reduced to arguing process rather than content.

The content of this bill is good. The content of this bill is accepted by the union members and the executive across this province. The content of this bill is accepted by the subtrades in this province as well. The content of this bill is accepted by the caucus. With any self-respecting Legislature in this country—the content of this bill should be accepted by this Legislature.

Sure, there may be amendments necessary. I'm not suggesting for a minute that we have written perfect legislation. Yes, we need a week of public hearings. Yes, I'm interested in hearing from people across the province. Yes, there may be ideas that we haven't thought of that could be tinkered with that could fix some parts of this bill. We're not so naive as to believe that it isn't possible that you could come up with a good idea. Yes, we do. But the thrust of the bill is good. It's a solid piece of legislation and it's got endorsements from the unions and the employers around this province.

So if you think that I get a little hot under the collar and expressive, you're right. It's shameful that you'd be reduced to this kind of silliness and name-calling. Rather than attacking the legislation, he's attacking in some kind of silly name-calling approach the member for Hamilton West is famous for.

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In conclusion, I look forward to a full debate on this bill. I look forward to the member opposite—I have to say that the member for Sudbury has been nothing but constructive with respect to this legislation. I talked to him beforehand. He says he's got some ideas where he may need some changes, amendments; I don't know if we can accept them or not.

Interjection: There's a hug you don't need.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I expect, member for Hamilton West, that was intended at you as well. He's a forlorn little fellow.

Maybe there are some amendments that we can actually bring forward too.

Mr Christopherson: I'm obnoxious and loud but not forlorn.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Yes, you are. You just don't know it.

Maybe you could bring forward those—and I'm not suggesting that these ideas can't come from the unions and subs out there as well. But the thrust of the bill is solid. If anyone brings forward amendments that change the basic fundamental beliefs of the bill, I would have to say no, I don't think that's on. But if there are some changes that you think are necessary that can work to make it a better bill—in my opinion, at committee they're always on because I have never thought for a moment that we're capable of writing a perfect piece of legislation without input from people on the other side of the House.

I want to thank my caucus for participating in this process, and participating very vigorously, I might add, through the caucus process. It was a vigorous debate and, I'll tell you, it prepared me for this time and it prepared me for the tour that I hopefully go on to try and explain this bill to others, because when you have good, vigorous debate within caucus, it only makes for a better piece of legislation. I do look forward to the members opposite—I want to hear their comments, because this is not our bill; this is the industry's bill. We're simply carrying the industry's bill to this Legislature.

In conclusion, this bill was worked on with one thing in mind: to make a better piece of legislation for the construction industry in Ontario today. We concluded by this: What they were working on for the last 20 to 25 years, everybody, every single person I spoke to agreed wasn't working; it was seriously flawed.

I appreciate any input. I thank you for your time and I look forward to the comments.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I think everybody here appreciates the passion with which the minister speaks, but I hope he will understand that it's not easy for us to simply forget all that's gone on in the past as well. I trust he won't actually get too exercised if there's some concern that this legislation in essence ultimately still means that it will put people in a position where our construction workers may also be earning less money. That's simply a fact of the matter and it's one that has a real impact.

Regardless of what the minister also says in terms of the reason this bill came about, there's probably not a great deal of doubt that the threat of an alternative that is much worse may indeed be a huge factor in some of the co-operation that the minister has been receiving. When one is in a situation where that is the alternative, obviously you recognize that you might want to keep

quiet about it. Some are quiet; some are not being quiet about it.

I just think it's important for all members of the House to recognize that there has been some legislation put forward by this government, and the minister certainly will recognize that—I think of Bill 31 which, quite frankly, was rushed through the Legislature. There were no amendments allowed; there were no hearings allowed. It absolutely took away the rights of unions in a very significant way, and we can go back to the early part of this government's mandate as well.

Like you, I'm looking forward to hearing my colleague and all the members in the House debate this, but you do need to understand it's not simply a matter of sitting here and saying: "This is really great. We think it's terrific." There's a quality of mistrust which I think to some degree has been earned. Regardless of all that's gone on, there are some great concerns related to this as well in terms of what impact it will have on workers in our province.

Mr Christopherson: It's interesting to listen to the minister comment. I think it's fair to say that he will probably go down in history as one of the most respected, effective Speakers of the House and, as someone who voted for him as the Speaker, I think he deserves it. He did a great job.

What upsets me the most about his approach to this—and I assure you, Minister, we will talk about one of the problems with this as a bill, as a piece of legislation as it affects working people. But your notion that we ought to just forget about the process would be very self-serving indeed, to use your own language, given the fact that we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for what motivated your government.

I want to say to you on a personal level, through the Speaker, in the short time of my two-minute response—and I want to say it now so you can respond to me this evening; although I won't be able to finish all my leadoff debate tonight, I should be able to get a good chunk of it underway—that what disappoints me the most and what outrages me is not that you've done something political, because this is a political arena and I understand the politics of being in cabinet and future aspirations that various people may have. I don't have a problem with any of that. I don't have a problem with the fact that you personally may have decided, "I've got a chance to shine here, to show that I'm not just a great Speaker but I can be a great minister too." I don't have a problem with that. What I have a problem with is you standing up and using the argument that this all started from some deep, heartfelt desire on your part or that of Premier Harris to help working people. That is crap. If that was the truth, some of these things would have generated out of the cold from the labour movement. They didn't.

You made a comment about the fact that some labour leaders may think that 1(4) was going to be pulled. That was the exact threat that was over their head. This isn't about, is this a good deal or not? This is about, is it a

better deal than the one we would have gotten if you had hammered us with 1(4)?

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Thank you, Mr Speaker. It's so nice to see you again. For a while you were not feeling well, but I hope now you do feel well.

As most people in the House will remember, as well as the public who are watching us tonight, in the residential sector in 1997 we had a major number of strikes. We had strike after strike after strike. The people who were affected most were the homeowners or the families who wanted to move into a new house. They've laid out all this money and all of a sudden they can't move in. They've been given excuse after excuse by bricklayers or drywallers or this and that.

With kudos to Minister Stockwell, he has had the guts—and it really takes guts. When I came into this portfolio as a parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, I realized how difficult the job is, not only for the minister but for the parliamentary assistant, in terms of how difficult it is to deal with the trades council or the ICI sector or the residential sector. This is a true compromise that the minister has struck.

We on this side of the House are truly amazed at how accomplished a job he has done. I have had discussions—the member of Sudbury was there, the opposition leader was there, and Howard Hampton, the leader of the third party, was there—in Sault Ste Marie with the building trades council. Mr Pat Dillon, the president of the council, was really amazed at the dialogue we had with them. He said, “We thought this government would never listen,” and we are listening.

I see my time is up.

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Mr Levac: I want to compliment the Minister of Labour for his passion. There's no question in my mind, and probably not in anyone else's mind, that he took this job very seriously, that he tried to get everybody to the table and he tried to make sure the best possible deal was done. I will give that to him.

But what I would like to suggest to him, as was done by the member for Thunder Bay—and in my discussions with the member for Sudbury, we talked about what impact there was going to be on the workers themselves in terms of their pay cut. They're going to start asking the questions: What group is next? Is there another group lined up to make less money? Is there another group lined up that's causing the problem for the industry? It's almost as if it's a bad thing to earn some money around here. “If you don't take a pay cut, we're going to cause some bigger problems for you.” That's the type of gun that I was making reference to. I wasn't talking about the status quo. I want to make it perfectly clear to the minister, I agree with him that the status quo, in a lot of the cases we're talking about, is not acceptable. But the art of compromise also is the art of listening, and I've heard from an awful lot of the workers at the ground level who are saying: “You know what? I feel like there

was a gun put to my head because I was going to get banged with a bigger one.” So it's like giving me the gun and, “Shoot your foot,” or else you'll go ahead and do it.

The difficulty I have is not the fact that there needed to be some changes in the discussion and some changes in the legislation that allowed for us to get across the entire trade industry as to what we can do to provide better service to the people of Ontario. What I have a concern with is this never-ending issue of, “We think there are an awful lot of people in this province who are making a little bit too much money,” and it's a little bit ironic that it happens to be unions.

Take a look at teachers, take a look at the trade unions, and you'll find out that people are going to start to say, “No one else can make the money.”

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Labour has two minutes to respond.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Thank you to the members from Brant, Hamilton West, Brampton, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, and Thunder Bay-Superior North.

I wanted to thank the parliamentary assistant from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, who worked very hard and tirelessly during the process of this negotiation.

To the member for Brant: I hear you. I can't argue conspiracy theories, because that's basically what is put out. I can't deal with it. If you have a conspiracy theory that somehow we were bonking people in the head or somebody is next on the hit parade, then you're going to have the theory. They make movies about that. I think I saw one with the Australian guy in it. “It's a conspiracy theory.” There was no conspiracy theory; there is no conspiracy theory. I can do no more than that. If you don't believe me, you don't believe me. That's basically it. There is no list of people that I have to go after to find out if they should be making less money. That was never the motivation. That was never the drive.

To the member for Hamilton West, I have a great deal of respect for him, actually. I appreciate the fact that he's very passionate, as I am, in his position. I understand this place is political. I don't think anyone would argue that I think it's anything less than political. I may be one of the more political people in here. But again, it's a conspiracy issue as well. What can I say? I can't argue with people about this conspiracy theory. If there was an ulterior motive, I didn't have it. It wasn't me.

Mr Levac: It was your caucus.

Hon Mr Stockwell: If it was my caucus, then it can't be conspiratorial because this is what we came up with. It seems to me you can always argue there's a conspiracy theory within government, but from what I see on the face of this legislation, it doesn't exist. This is as blunt, fresh and factual as we could make it.

I appreciate the fact that you may not vote in favour of this. I understand opposition's role is to oppose. I'm looking for constructive opposition. I'm offering public hearings. I'm offering committee dates. I'm offering reviewing amendments. What more can I do?

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I am honoured and privileged, I believe, to be able to stand up and spend some time debating Bill 69. I will be sharing my time with the members for Sarnia-Lambton, Ottawa Centre and Timiskaming-Cochrane.

To start off, I'm going to try not to be personal in my discussion this evening, but I think, if there is a level of mistrust out there, it's because of the headlines that the people of Ontario have lived with over the course of the last five years when it comes to labour and unions in this province; for example, "Union Accuses Province of Breaking Rules," "Ontario Eyes Restrictions on Union Drives," "There's Labour Trouble Brewing," "Tory Proposed Amendments to Ontario Labour Law Will Hurt Already Vulnerable Workers," "Workers Threatened by Minister's Scheme to Change Laws, says OFL."

We know that perception is reality, whether it be in this House or outside in the real world, and perception in these instances is in fact reality.

Probably one of the biggest concerns I have, as I look at the legislation generally, is that over the last 35-odd years I see there has been relatively stable labour relations and that when that stability has been out of balance there has been dialogue between both sides in a very reasoned and unimpassioned manner. But I think that has all been changed. I think that now the Ontario Labour Relations Act is being used as a football. I think that is an injustice to the workers and also to the contractors in this province. If we look back at Bill 7, Bill 31 and now Bill 69, we will see that those bills and this bill are evolving because of a political agenda, because of a philosophy and because of a political promise that said, "We will level the playing field in this province." I believe that when that level playing field becomes a slippery slope, we should all take note and try to stop it before it becomes law or at least to amend it so it's a law that is palatable.

I want to forget for the moment that the Harris government may be perceived to be anti-labour just for the sake of being anti-labour. But it's hard to fathom the reasoning behind Bill 69 if you believe the government rhetoric when they say most of Ontario is enjoying an economic boom. Of course, we say that is thanks to a strong US economy that provides a good market for our exports. But productivity is up, profits are up, executive pay is up and the stock market is up. Yet workers' pay is going down, and the gap between the rich and the rest of us is growing. The truth is, there is absolutely no cause or justification for this government to attempt to slant Ontario labour laws in favour of big business or the major general contractors.

The reality is that Ontarians have worked hard for decades to ensure fairness, opportunity, security, dignity, justice and a voice for working people. These principles have been guaranteed through Ontario labour laws. Guaranteeing workers' legal rights didn't come easily, but was the result of a concerted effort not only by workers and labour leaders, but also by enlightened employers and enlightened politicians who knew that

only the law would ensure that the value of one's work was accurately reflected in the workplace. I believe that is fundamental. I believe that has to remain if we are to have a fair Ontario with a fair and level playing field in the construction industry.

In order to truly appreciate where I come from when I get up and speak about labour and the construction industry, I think it is important for you to understand a little of my own history. I come from a family whose father was a bricklayer who worked very hard in the industry. He was a man who climbed an unsafe scaffold, fell from that scaffold and was almost killed. I, as a six-year-old child, and my older sister were prepared by my mother on our way to St Joseph's Hospital in Sudbury for the eventuality that my father might not live through the night. The reality is that through the grace of God—and I'm not afraid to say that—and through the grace and talent of hard workers in the medical field in Sudbury at the time, he survived and devoted the rest of his life, both as a bricklayer and later as a subcontractor, to safety in the workplace. As I grew up and began working in the summers—the first summer at the age of 14—he stressed to me and to the rest of the workers the importance of safety. Later on I'm going to discuss how I believe this type of legislation in many ways compromises the safety aspects in the construction industry.

1950

I well remember the second summer I worked. The labourers' union went on strike. It was my second day at work. As we did every morning, I packed my lunch pail and got into the truck, and he drove me. I fully anticipated I would be going to work. He drove me to our shop, which was on the old Strudwick Avenue, and he stopped in front of the picket line and said: "Get out and join your fellow labourers. You belong with them." Before I left the truck, he said, "I want you to remember that as a construction worker you are entitled to two things: (1) you are entitled to negotiate for a fair and honest wage, and (2) you are entitled to a workplace that is free of hazards." He believed that. For the rest of his life, for as long as I can remember him in the industry—and he was there until he was 70 years old—he fought as an employer for a safe workplace and he fought for his people, his workers, so they would have a fair living. That's where I come from when I read legislation such as Bill 7 and Bill 31, which impacts the construction industry so directly, and as I studied Bill 69 on the weekend. There is reason for concern.

I respect the Minister of Labour. I believe he is a man of integrity, but I do not share his belief that the unions have bought into his solution to the perceived problem we have with section 1(4). The reality is—and he used the Sudbury experience so often that I want to come back to it—I didn't talk to a union business manager or to a worker this weekend who is in agreement with this legislation. In fact, there are many concerns that the people in northern Ontario—the construction workers in northern Ontario—want me to address. Hopefully I'll do

that in a very positive and meaningful way as we go through the debate today.

I think it's important to understand that whether you have a particular political bent or philosophy, if you are open to suggestion, to discussion and to amendments, maybe at the end of all this we can have legislation that is palatable to all. Right now, the reality is that there is a group of general contractors who are very unhappy with the legislation, because they didn't get what they wanted. They wanted the abolition of section 1(4) from the Labour Relations Act, and nothing else would do.

They didn't get it now, but I'm concerned about what is going to happen 18 months from now when this entire legislation in the ICI—the industrial, commercial and institutional sector—comes up for review by the minister. There is going to be enormous pressure on the government and the minister over the next 18 months, and I'm very fearful that what the general contractors didn't get this time they may get 18 months from now.

During committee hearings and during debate, I'm going to be offering some amendments which will protect the construction workers for that 18-month review. I trust the minister when he says he is open to amendments. I think he's serious. I hope he will accept the amendments I will be making to protect construction workers in this review.

We have to talk about mobility for a while. Because the Minister of Labour used the Sudbury example, I'd like to follow up on that. First of all, let's explain what mobility is. Mobility simply means that if an out-of-town contractor gets a job in Sudbury, he can bring some of the workforce with him to Sudbury. That's called mobility. The minister said, "We're only going to allow them to bring 40% of the workforce to Sudbury." I've got to be honest with you. I have a little bit of concern with that high a percentage. Right now it is a provincially negotiated item. The minister was right when he said a contractor can only bring one electrical worker. Some unions allow two, some unions allow five, some unions allow 40 and some unions allow 60. The reality is, you have to look at the geographical makeup of the area. Pause for a second. The members on the government side will realize that certainly any member from northern Ontario in my caucus has gotten up repeatedly and said, "We need an infusion in our economy in northern Ontario," whether it be Timiskaming or Manitoulin Island, Thunder Bay or Sudbury.

Let's look at Sudbury. A contractor from Toronto gets a job. He's going to employ 100 construction workers; 40 of those workers can come from Toronto and work in Sudbury. When you look at the fact that northern Ontario construction workers in Sudbury have not worked on construction jobs over the course of the last five years—and if they have, they've been minimal—when you have 40% of the workforce coming from out of the geographic area, you are impacting our community negatively in many ways. Those 40 pay no taxes to our community, those 40 do not buy cars in our community, those 40 do

not buy houses in our community and those 40 do not support the businesses of Sudbury.

How does that impact on the local union in Sudbury? The donations made to the pension plan at the local suffer. The contributions toward training programs suffer. There is a negative impact with the mobility percentage that's been outlined by the minister in this legislation. I believe that needs addressing. We, as a caucus, will be offering an amendment to the mobility clause as we move on. I would hope the minister will give serious consideration to the percentage of people allowed to move from one geographic area to another geographic area through the mobility factor.

I believe we have to look at the naming issue the minister outlined. To explain what the naming component of the ICI legislation is, it simply means that the contractor not only has the authority to bring 40% from out of town to another geographic area, but he also has the right to name, to pick, to choose, to demand 60% of the remaining workforce—or another 36% he can name. So if he doesn't like David, he says, "David's not coming"; if he doesn't like Chris, he says, "Chris is not coming"; if he likes Elizabeth, Elizabeth's working; if he likes David, David's working.

I've got to tell you, you will quickly learn that you are jeopardizing safety by allowing such a high percentage to be named by the contractor. I'm not saying for a moment that all contractors compromise worker safety—that's not what I'm saying—but there are those out there who will want to maximize their profits, and if that means they have to minimize safety on the work site, they're prepared to do that.

2000

Right now there are safeguards built into this; we know that. By and large what will happen is that if you decide to challenge your employer about a safe workplace, I can almost guarantee you that you will not be named by that contractor on the next job. I can almost guarantee you that no other contractor will name you, because you who strive for a safe work environment, you who believe that union men and women should be protected, that they should have a safe work environment so that you can climb the scaffold and not worry about falling, so that you don't have to worry about the planks falling on your head, whether you're wearing a safety helmet or not, you—those people—will not be named by those contractors who want to maximize their profits.

I believe an amendment and revision to the naming clause has to take place. I would hope the minister will accept the amendment that the Liberal Party will make with regard to the naming component of the legislation.

If you look at what's happened so far—40% of the workforce can be brought up by the contractor and 36% of the remaining jobs will be named by the contractor—you're looking at 76% of 100% of the people who are working that the contractor has total control over. That only leaves 24% remaining to be named in the union hall or by the business agent or business manager, whatever you want to call that process. I believe in many ways we

will be excluding those workers who have placed the most years in the construction industry. We will be excluding them from work. I believe that we must be very cognizant of the fact that in defining what the percentages are going to be, there is fairness not only for the contractor, because he deserves fairness, but we must also be extremely fair to the worker from the jurisdiction that the contractor has to be in and to the community that is building the project.

I think of Sudbury and I think of the hospital right away because right now we're struggling to try to raise \$45 million so that we are able to build the super hospital that this government had dictated we should build in their hospital restructuring plan. That's going to create much-needed and long-overdue construction jobs and I'm happy for that. But when I think that an out-of-town contractor can bring so many workers into my community and when I think that the young kid just starting out after learning his trade is going to be on the shelf, or the older person who has spent so many years eking out a living in construction in northern Ontario is not going to be chosen by the contractor, somehow there is no fairness there for me. I find that we have to make some kind of modifications to the plan to ensure there is fairness for all.

The minister spoke about competitiveness. Listen, I come from both sides of the issue. I worked as a labourer and was lucky enough to learn the skill of bricklaying. I didn't apply it as a trade for a long period of time because I chose to go back to school, but I was fortunate enough, honoured enough to be able to work with these guys. Then I saw the other side. I saw a father who struggled as a subcontractor, a guy who had to bid on the jobs, all the things that subcontractors do with general contractors etc. I can appreciate both sides of the issue and I can appreciate competitiveness. But I wonder, and the minister hasn't answered this question, who's going to determine the competitiveness. Is it going to be based on non-union rates and conditions? Then obviously, if that's what the competitiveness is going to be based on, I'm afraid that the union wages are going to be brought down to non-union-wage scale. I honestly think the minister alluded to the fact that wages are going to drop. Certainly the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North said it and the member from Brant said it.

That's a reality out there, and if the unions are going to have to work for non-union pay, what happens to the training programs we have in place? Union members in Ontario put over \$15 million a year into updating their skills and training apprentices. I believe we should not lose sight of the fact that unions do an awful lot of good in the province of Ontario in training our skilled people to meet the needs in the construction industry. I'm afraid that's going to suffer if in fact we're not very, very careful about how we define competitiveness.

I think once these wages fall, in Sudbury in particular, in northeastern Ontario, because I live there and I can speak about those areas with the most amount of confidence on the factual information, you're looking at

Sudbury with 17.3% of people living below the poverty line, many of those in the construction field, because they haven't worked in the field for several years on a consistent basis.

I think Bill 69 may solve a particular problem in a particular area of Ontario to some degree, but I think it creates a bigger problem for a bigger area of Ontario than the minister realizes or the government realizes. I would hope that during those public hearings the minister is open to the concerns he's going to hear. Just let me talk about those public hearings for a moment. The reality is, there are four days of public hearings; I guess that was deemed a week in this place. The reality is they're not going to move out of Toronto.

One of the recommendations I'm going to make to the minister is that he at least visit one site in northern Ontario. I would hope that site is Sudbury. But I believe it's important for him to at least leave Toronto for one day and find out what other people are talking about in other geographic areas, in particular northern Ontario; either northeastern Ontario or northwestern Ontario would be prime locations. I would hope that he's open to at least one day of public hearings outside Toronto.

I think we also have to spend a few moments talking about the "key man" provision. I think the proper term should be the "key person" provision here. Whether it be fundamentally wrong from a protocol point of view, I believe the "key person" provision is fundamentally wrong the way it is defined because it allows for the removal of 1(4), not through the front door but through the back door. I don't want the minister to think that this is a conspiracy theory on my part. The reality is, it is in fact the truth. The way the "key person" provision is defined in the legislation opens the door for the removal of 1(4) in a very, very real way.

2010

In summation, let me talk about where our concerns are: with mobility, with naming, with the "key person" provision and with the definition of "competitiveness." I've outlined what my concerns are; at a later time I will be outlining what our solutions are. Whether they're accepted by the minister and by the government is another issue, but they will be real, they will be tangible and in all truth I believe they will make the legislation much better.

When the playing field is level, it is only natural that there will be mutual respect and a willingness to negotiate for better legislation on both sides. Our amendments will foster that. Trust is fostered by a spirit of good which prevails. People will be happier, productivity will be up and obviously this type of approach will lead to a more productive Ontario for all parties.

But when the level playing field becomes a slippery slope, as I said in the beginning, the only losers are the workers in this province, and in this case it will be the construction workers of Ontario. I don't believe that any member on any side of the House wants that.

I look to open discussion with the minister. I look for the minister—and the government—to be open to the

amendments he will receive from the Liberal Party and I'm sure from the New Democratic Party. I hope he will be open to the presentations he will receive from the unions across this province during public hearings. And I would hope at the end of all of this process there is a bill—although, in my estimation, one that isn't necessary at this point in time, but the government is hell-bent on passing some legislation, so some piece of legislation is going to be passed; it's going to be called Bill 69. I hope it will address fairness for the workers in the construction industry, fairness for the unions in the construction industry and fairness for all.

I pass on to the member from Sarnia.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I want to first of all thank the minister. He came to Sarnia-Lambton in January to hear and to see about the tragic legacy on occupational disease. I've only spoken to Minister Stockwell a couple of times, but I must say that I have a sense of the fairness he often brings to the table in discussions, and I appreciate that. But it's incumbent on me to also say that occupational disease and the long battle to recognize the cause has not been driven by the workplace but by the unions. There was great resistance by the industry to addressing this horrible problem.

The minister makes a compelling argument for his bill, but I would just like to give a slightly different perspective. In my constituency of Sarnia-Lambton, as in many other jurisdictions, unions and industry have had a working relationship that at times is healthy and then at times is tenuous. I found a quote by John Kenneth Galbraith in *The Good Society*. It speaks about how "the comfortable will be afflicted in a useful way." I find that unions at times can afflict in a useful way. That's the nature of the different jurisdiction that each represents—unions and business.

The provincial Liberals believe in the need for business to be competitive. But our balance lies in ensuring that workers also deserve a good wage. Mike Harris's track record on the labour front, unfortunately, is all about confrontation. The actions of the Harris government have been to pit labour against management and to dictate ultimatums. That is just the track record and that's the tone of arrogance that has become the trademark for this government.

Labour laws are like collective agreements, of course. Both sides should leave feeling that a balanced agreement has been arrived at by all parties. I believe that this minister speaks with this spirit; unfortunately, I believe that his government doesn't appear to, and has had a terrible record on this matter.

The sense of balance produces a competitive workplace and good management relations. My father was a union member. It's because he was provided an opportunity to earn a fair wage that he was able to provide opportunities for his family, for us, for his three daughters. He didn't have big business to look after him. My family went on, and we've had a construction business for 25 years, so we understand the other side of

the spectrum. Business needs good workers and workers need business, and workers deserve good wages.

It is the reality that the neo-conservative agenda is about attacking working people, and listening, oftentimes first and foremost, to the special interest groups of big business, who support and buy into their agenda. That unfortunately is the track record, and it is under this cloud of mistrust and conflict that the labour community is talking to the government.

I would like to put on record, as well, some of the past record of the Conservative government. These bills have oftentimes stripped workers of basic protection, as this bill does in some instances. Bill 7, the NDP labour legislation, was repealed, allowing use of replacement workers. There was Bill 49, changes to the Employment Standards Act, and it eroded minimum provisions for overtime pay, hours of work, and many other work conditions for non-union employees. This is the track record. Bill 99, changes to the Workers' Compensation Board, cut benefits to injured workers. Bill 136, the public sector union legislation, stripped bargaining rights for health care sector workers. Bill 31, the construction trades and Wal-Mart bill, eliminated protection for construction unions and made it more difficult to certify new unions. Bill 55, changes to apprenticeships, lowered standards for new apprentices, set new tuition fees and lowered apprenticeship wages.

I believe the cuts to the Ministry of Labour have oftentimes threatened worker health and safety. I speak to this only because I know and I say that the minister speaks with a spirit of balance and fairness, but I say that his government does not do so, and it has not shown to be that way in action.

The construction unions, yes, are split on this legislation, but while a minority has spoken out against the bill, the majority remain grudgingly quiet, because they're concerned that any opposition would lead to the elimination of section 1(4) of the Ontario Labour Relations Act. Ontario's main contractors are also opposing the bill, because they claim that only the elimination of section 1(4) will make their unionized companies competitive with non-unionized firms.

2020

A fair wage and benefits are not just for corporate Ontario; they're for workers as well. I want to highlight from another section in *The Good Society* how important it is to ensure a fair wage and how valuable it is for people to earn a fair wage: "Nothing, it must be recognized, so comprehensively denies the liberties of an individual as a total absence of money. Or so impairs it as too little." It goes on to say: "Nothing so inspires socially useful effort as the prospect of pecuniary reward This too the good society must acknowledge."

This bill is not so much about achieving balance, I think; it's about workers losing some of their basic rights unless they agree to measures that will reduce their wages. This bill could also result in workers from large urban centres being brought in to compete for the jobs of rural and local construction workers.

I am pleasantly surprised that for the first time in this House, in this Legislature, I have heard the minister, with a tone of sincerity, I believe, ask opposition members for input and for amendments. I hope this will soon come to pass, and that the member for Sudbury will have an opportunity to present amendments that will be taken into consideration by the minister.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I want to acknowledge the comments of my colleagues from Sudbury and Sarnia-Lambton, for some personal experience, through their families, related to labour, labour relations, unionization and fairness for workers.

I'd like to begin with a bit of a backdrop that is somewhat contrasted by the spirit of the bombastic minister today, as he presented his case with full enthusiasm. But there are those out there who are saying: "It's payback time. It's been almost a year since the election." Of course, the best friends of the Tories are the contractors—they certainly aren't the trades—and this is payback time now. Like my colleague from Sudbury has said, I have not met one tradesperson, one unionized individual who has said: "This is great. This is fantastic. This is something I'm really happy with."

That's not to say there are not some areas that need to be negotiated. I think all sides agree with that. But when we look at what continues to happen, no matter what the legislation is—I was former labour critic, and I see that the former labour minister is here this evening, because she has a great interest in this field. I'm sure she's disappointed to be the Minister of Health rather than the Minister of Labour because of all the problems she has in the health ministry.

But might we be facing a circumstance like, for example, when this government in looking at trying to save money let go of 8,000 to 10,000 nurses and today we face trying to entice those nurses back to Ontario hospitals? By the way, that is especially difficult in community care because of the discrepancy in wages. Hospitals now, even though they have debts, are saying they have to offer incentives to try to bring back from New York or Australia or different jurisdictions nurses who used to be in Ontario. So labour mobility and competitiveness have many dimensions and many dynamics.

I also offer this: We have here a minister who is saying, "We should have hearings, we should listen to amendments, I'm open to all sides." Fine. The problem is that you have an 18-month arrangement. In other words, this may be the forerunner of one thing or another. It may be the forerunner of chaos, or it may be the forerunner of another step. I don't want to speculate on that. However, for the workers who see this as having given up some security, having worried perhaps about some wage losses and about an enhanced work environment, it seems to me they still have the threat hanging over their heads because nothing is finalized. Why is it hanging over their heads? They know that the contractors, especially the big ones, are still saying: "It's not good enough. We still want double-breasting or 1(4) gone." What is that going to

change? What will it tell you at the end of that period? I leave that for people to consider.

I noticed my friend from Sudbury read a number of quotes that showed some worry and concern. You'll find that many communities that have a higher percentage of unemployed people are worried about this. They are extremely conscious of the overpowering influence of the Toronto corporate sector.

This article is certainly quite complimentary toward the minister. It was written in the Toronto Star. It's not from the Toronto Sun; it's actually from the Toronto Star. It says that much of the credit goes to the minister for having pulled all the parties together. I will give the minister that: He obviously shows a propensity toward not just jumping in without thinking or at the behest of the boys in the backroom, but actually saying, "I'm going to check this out." I give him credit for that. I think he has worked hard on that, and I think he has brought people together, perhaps for the first time. Maybe this government has turned a corner in its approach to how it will face labour relations in this province, because there are lots of fences to be mended.

When we look at the overall arrangement, I have to say it boils down to three or four reasons. One, no matter how you cut it you are going to see less wages for workers. Will there be less profits for corporate contractors? I doubt it. The reduction or the elimination of some worker benefits—obviously with that go pension arrangements as well.

My friend from Sudbury talked about the concern around safe workplaces, and it's a very legitimate concern, because those who have been in this field for a while know the very high rate of injury that takes place on certain sites. It's certainly a very large risk in the construction industry.

2030

When we talk about the area of mobility, members will know that I come from the Ottawa area, so for eastern Ontario and Ottawa mobility is a big factor. Will this abate that or will it enhance it? Quite frankly, I don't think it will enhance the arrangement at all. What needs to be addressed is the agreement between Ontario and Quebec. I'm going to leave this to be dealt with by my friend from Prescott-Russell because he has spent a great deal of time on this particular issue up and down the Ottawa River, which divides Ontario and Quebec.

To allow my colleagues to share some of their thoughts, my final comment is to remember this: There are not too many non-union companies that invest a great deal in training. When you look at it, the unionized companies do. They have that agreement because that contract has been made. At the end of the day, it is the highest quality of the productivity of our workers that will give us the competitive edge we talk about; not trying to water that down, as was done in Bill 55, not trying to do away with opportunities for a healthy, dynamic but unanimous work environment, but through trying to bring together the highest possible training standards for the skilled labour that we have, that the

Minister of Tourism loves to place in our brochures when we talk to any other jurisdiction. And he's talking about the existing arrangement, not what would happen as a result of this bill.

I look forward to the hearings. I look forward to the opportunity to put forward amendments, as our critic from Sudbury has already mentioned. I truly hope it will go well, I look forward to hearing all sides of the story, but I must caution and say to remember this: No matter what happens, it's only an 18-month deal. It's what happens between now and then and what happens after that 18-month period takes place that will really show the mettle and the test of integrity.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I won't go over what every one of our members has said, but I have to congratulate the members for Sudbury, Ottawa Centre and Sarnia-Lambton.

Let me tell you, I was sure when I read the title of the bill that we would have something in there that would definitely guarantee Ontario construction workers a job in Ontario. But as I look at this, at the present time a contractor from outside the province could come into Ontario with at least 40% of his work crew from another province. This doesn't guarantee. We know that at the present time construction mobility in eastern Ontario and all along the Ottawa River is not a level playing field. They are able to come into Ontario and we cannot go to the other side. We just have to remember, when we look at Bill 17, which was passed just prior to the election, it was a really good election promise by the Premier and also the former Minister of Labour. We said at that point that if Quebec construction workers were to come on this side to work, they would have to pay a certain fee, as long as we have published in Ontario for the labour force we were looking for. But at the present time there's no protection in the bill.

There's one thing I'm surprised not to see in the bill. There's absolutely no protection for our construction workers. If a non-unionized contractor decided to put a quotation on a job, he could quote on the job and those poor construction workers would have no guarantee of a good retirement benefit. At the present time, contractors are hiring workers at \$9 or \$8 an hour. They work right up to the age of 65 and they have no guarantee for the future. There's no protection. There should be a clause in there that really spells out clearly that anybody who makes a quotation on a construction job has to add in the cost of a retirement plan. There's nothing in there for the future.

We know that in the last five years the average family revenue in Ontario has decreased. Why? Because we just don't care. This government has not given any protection to our workers. We are looking at the big pocket and we forget about the construction workers.

I'm going to give a chance now to my colleague Mr Ramsay, the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane, to continue the discussion of this very important bill.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I'm in great company tonight following the speeches of the

members from Prescott-Russell, Ottawa Centre, Sarnia-Lambton and of course the member for Sudbury, our labour critic, who is representing us very ably through this piece of legislation. I share all the concerns that all my colleagues have brought up and want to touch upon a couple of the areas of this bill and, also like the member from Prescott-Russell, how this bill relates to north-eastern Ontario and affects other industries besides construction.

As the member from Sudbury started in his leadoff, this section on mobility is of concern to northerners. As you know, a lot of the employment that we get in northern Ontario is highway construction and construction of various buildings throughout the north. For many reasons, the larger companies of southern Ontario are better equipped to compete for a lot of these bigger jobs than maybe some of ours. A lot of times the northern companies get these tenders but many times they don't. At least when the southern Ontario firm comes up to northern Ontario, we have a sense that we will probably get most of the construction jobs or the labour jobs on these projects.

Looking at this bill now, as the member has said, up to 40% of the workforce can be brought in by the contractor, which means that for some of the small communities in the north that really depend on our different construction jobs for a big part of our economy, what it's going to be is that a contractor can move in almost a small town or a hamlet's worth of people and just take over all the work that we hoped would be some of our seasonal work. That's a big concern, and while some of these non-union companies might see it as an advantage to them, it certainly is a great disadvantage to northern Ontario and the people who work in these industries up north.

I also share the member's concern about the naming component. We were discussing this earlier today in a meeting. One of the tenets of a safe workplace in Ontario is the right to refuse unsafe work. Unions over the years fought very hard for this right. The right was granted in legislation in this province many years ago. This naming component, whereby a contractor can basically pick a very large percentage of his or her employees for these various jobs, means that if an employee decided to refuse to work because he or she thought it was unsafe, it certainly could mean that this person would be perceived as being a potential nuisance on future jobs and that contractor then would probably choose, human nature being what it is, not to name that person to a project next time. That's a big concern for sure. I think we have to look at that because paramount in all the legislation we do we have to make sure that we save lives.

We all came from ceremonies last week where we reflected on past workplace accidents across the province in the various sectors of our economy, and 3,321 deaths in the last five years is far too many. If we start watering down our occupational health and safety regulations in this province then we're going to see more deaths and workplace accidents and permanent disabilities caused by the workplace. We've got to make sure that any

legislation that passes in this place doesn't dilute the hard work that has been accomplished in the past in trying to make the Ontario workplace safer.

As the member from Prescott-Russell brought up his concerns from an eastern Ontario perspective, I'd like to bring up the concerns of the Quebec worker invasion, if you will, from a northeastern Ontario perspective. Many of the jobs of northeastern Ontario are taken by Quebec workers. You would ask, don't we have free labour mobility in this country and shouldn't it be so in Canada? I for one certainly agree that there should be free labour mobility right across this country. But we've seen with the restrictive labour mobility practices in the province of Quebec that there is an unfair advantage to Quebec workers, especially in the industries that make up a big part of the work in northeastern Ontario, being in forestry, woodcutters specifically in forestry, and log haulers to the mills, and also with mining and miners who work those mines in northeastern Ontario.

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If you look at the various operations in the northwest and the northeast, you will see that in northwestern Quebec there would be no more than a handful of Ontario workers in those industries, if that. But you come across the border into northeastern Ontario and you will find that up to 50% or over 50% of some of the mines in northeastern Ontario entertain Quebec workers. Much of the forestry operations in the greater northeastern Ontario are basically controlled by Quebec contractors bringing in Quebec woodcutters.

It's this type of unfair advantage that this bill reminds me of. We do not have a level playing field across this country. An area such as northern Ontario, which is so dependent upon so few sectors of a very broadening out economy such as we have in the south, really depends on the little work we do have based primarily on our resources, and we will continue to depend on that until the day we can add value and move into the technology industries that southern Ontario has. Until that day comes, we have to make sure that we fight for our fair share of the work. As stated by the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, we don't have that, whether it be in construction, in forestry, in mining, or in many of the trucking jobs along the Quebec-Ontario corridor.

The mobility restrictions in this bill could bring the same sorts of problems to northeastern Ontario as with the present situation between the Quebec and Ontario governments. I would say to the ministry staff who are here tonight that this is not an issue that people of the northeast are going to drop. The people in the northeast feel that their jobs are being stolen by the workers from Quebec, and the Ontario government, contrary to what Bill 17 looked like—fairness being a two-way street, passed just before the last election—and what it might have said, it is not remedying the situation. This minister is not getting tough with the workers from Quebec, as he said he would in Bill 17. In fact, that bill has been set aside as negotiations and talks go on. Meanwhile, Ontarians lose jobs to Quebecers while Ontarians do not

get an opportunity to work in Quebec. These things have to be rectified if we are to have a prosperous economy, and this is especially true in northeastern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Questions and comments?

Mr Christopherson: I want to comment on some of the remarks made by a colleague from the Liberal caucus and, given the limited time, I think I'd like to stay specifically with comments the member for Samia-Lambton made when she outlined some of the things this government has done in the past vis-à-vis labour legislation they've brought in.

I'd like to add to that discussion a quote, as close to it as I could write it down—it can be checked against Hansard, and if I'm wrong in a word or two, I apologize; that's not deliberate. I wrote it down as I heard the minister say it, and he said something to the effect of, "We wouldn't believe we could write perfect legislation without input from the other side of the House." Because of course his whole tone was one of trying to sound oh so reasonable and oh so fair, and this is all about those workers and, "We wouldn't change anything without listening to the members of the other side and the opinions they have."

Then, of course, you start jotting down just a short list of some of the things that you've rammed through that have taken away rights from workers, and you didn't listen to anybody: not us, not the workers, not their leadership, no one, not a word.

Bill 7, probably the granddaddy of them all, framed by your government as "a few changes to the Ontario Labour Relations Act and repealing Bill 40," the bill the NDP brought in. Absolutely not the whole story. That was a brand new Ontario Labour Relations Act from front to back in every sense and there was not one minute of public hearings. In fact, we had a news conference today because in that bill you took away the rights of industrial farm workers to belong to a union, and they've got to go to the Supreme Court of Canada to get back the rights that our NDP government gave them in the first place. Don't talk to us—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr Gill: I do appreciate the comments from the members for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Ottawa Centre, Sudbury, even Hamilton West, if I may say so myself.

I know one of the things that was brought up was labour mobility. You know what happens in many situations. You have a contract and you have workers and you work with the people and those people you work with are good workers. You want to make sure wherever you go you want to reward them, you want to take them with you. In previous times, before this bill was introduced, you could only take one person from the 100 that you worked with to a new situation. This bill allows people mobility. You can go in and you can bring in 60% of the workers. You know what that does? It doesn't take away the right from any worker, but at the same time it continues the momentum and the sort of union you've

built up with your workers, the goodwill, because you know that they've worked hard for you and they'll work hard for you again.

In my discussions with people, every Ontario worker wants to get the opportunity to work. Nobody has said to me yet, including union members, that they don't want to work. This government wants to give that opportunity to everyone. Some of the people in unions came to me saying—and some of the people opposite may not agree with what I'm saying—"We have gone to the corporations that are non-union and we have told them we want to work, and we registered on both sides of the thing, unionized and non-unionized." We want to ensure that every worker who wants to work has the right to work.

Mr Gravelle: I certainly want to compliment all my colleagues, led by our labour critic, Mr Bartolucci from Sudbury, and the member for Ottawa Centre, the members for Sarnia-Lambton, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and Timiskaming-Cochrane for their great additions to this debate. I think their great concern is that this piece of legislation does need some improvements and some real consideration.

But if I may in the short period of time that I have make reference specifically to the member for Sudbury's reference to the whole question of safety, which is one that's very dear to my heart. I put through a private member's bill that actually passed second reading back in December, which is An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students. It's truly an effort to reduce, if not eliminate, the number of accidents that take place with people who are just entering the workforce. I must say, this is something that we're shepherding through legislation but also working with the minister very directly on. I appreciate the minister's and his ministry's co-operation.

But there are some very interesting points that need to be made that relate to this piece of legislation. They were brought forward to me very strongly this past Friday, the national day of mourning. I was at the labour centre in Thunder Bay where we were commemorating that sad day, but a day that needs to be commemorated. The point to be made is that the incidence of accidents in workplaces that are unionized as opposed to those that are non-unionized are substantially different. In fact, it's about a 300% increase in terms of the number of accidents in non-unionized workforces.

I think that needs to be taken into consideration, that indeed the unionized workforce has an absolute priority in terms of safety. I don't think you can put a price on a life. You can't put a price on safety. But I think it needs to be noted while we move down this path to legislation that will in essence reduce the impact of unionized workers that indeed the unionized workforce has to be praised and recognized as one that treasures safety. I appreciate my colleagues making some amendments in that regard.

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Mr Levac: I want to pick up on something the Minister of Labour said a little earlier in response to the

concern I raised with him regarding the fact that we are taking a look at a piece of legislation that has not been doubted by him, by the way, in terms of lowering wages. When you don't take care of that issue of lower wages, there is the impact that has on the rest of the community. The lower wages produced by this legislation will also impact the entire community in which those workers work.

In essence, what you're going to see is that they are going to spend a lot less money in the rest of the community and that they're going to be a little bit tentative before they make a decision on any of those types of purchases they are deciding to make, particularly the big ticket items. Those big ticket items are where the manufacturers are going to start taking a look at it. How much input have the manufacturers had into this type of legislation? The recognition of whether or not those workers are going to be able to start footing the bigger bills for the bigger ticket items has to be analyzed to see what kind of impact that's going to have on the entire community in which these people work.

The other point I wanted to make reference to was the minister's decision to simply hide behind the mask of the conspiracy theory, the implication that he didn't want to dignify with a response that something strange was going on. The Warren commission right now: The members on the other side probably think Warren had the answer, that that was it, that whatever he said was absolutely right: no conspiracy, Kennedy was shot by a single guy—boom—end of story. I have to tell you, there are not very many people on this entire planet who believe the Warren commission was absolutely dead-on with its analysis. So I think maybe we'd better start digging a little bit deeper.

I think we'd also better ask this question: What was the debate that went on in that caucus? We weren't talking about the status quo; we were talking about how extreme—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member for Sudbury.

Mr Bartolucci: I'd like to thank the member for Hamilton East, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, the members for Thunder Bay-Superior North and Brant for their comments. When you put it all down to a few words, it's simple: If in fact we're dealing with workplace democracy and making sure that the workplace is as democratic as it could possibly be, I would challenge the government to put this legislation to a vote by the construction workers of Ontario. I would be surprised—no, I don't think I would be so surprised about the results that would come from that. This is a government that believes in referendums and a referendum with regard to democracy in the workplace would be very interesting. The reality is we are going to have to deal with some very serious amendments here to make this legislation palatable to all.

I don't think it will work because the reality is that the unions didn't ask for this. The reality is that a group of general contractors approached the government and said, "Let's get rid of 1(4)." When you go right back to the

beginning point, it was that. I doubt very much if all the unions are going to buy in. If a majority of them are going to buy in we will only see as time unfolds. They have their meetings on Tuesday and Wednesday. If there is a buy-in, it is a buy-in that at best can be described as a forced buy-in, because they knew what would be in place if they didn't buy in.

We need amendments to the legislation to make it better legislation. We need public hearings. We need at least one day out of the Toronto for public hearings, hopefully somewhere in northern Ontario, hopefully in Sudbury. We need strong amendments from the union, amendments from the opposition and amendments from the government to make it better legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. I note there is a little over 30 minutes of the session remaining today, and with an hour's time for leadoff that means I'll get about half done today and then conclude on another day, which will give me an opportunity to check the Hansard for verbatim quotes of what the minister said. I did the best I could jotting down some of the things he said that I thought needed to be responded to prior to my getting into the details of Bill 69 and its implications as we in the NDP see them.

First of all, the minister spoke about what opposition—again this is in the context of what motivated him to do all of this. As much as he likes to say, and I say this again, that it doesn't matter, it matters a lot. It matters a great deal what your starting point is and the motivation for negotiations, particularly when the word "negotiations" is being bandied around here so loosely.

The fact of the matter is that the minister basically loaded up his political gun, used the bullet of 1(4), pointed it at the head of the construction unions and said, "Either negotiate something your employers can live with, with which I'm also satisfied, or we fire this political gun," so 1(4) comes out of the Ontario Labour Relations Act and then Ontario gets to enjoy the benefits for workers that Alberta now provides to their workers.

If anyone wants to know what Ontario would look like for those workers here in Ontario if section 1(4) were removed, talk to someone in Alberta. If you've got a family, a relative, a friend, somebody else you know in the construction business who works there, ask them what happened to their world in terms of wages, benefits, job opportunities, when the Alberta government brought in precisely the same threat. If you think they weren't threatened—and I'm not telling any secrets because I don't know how you could imagine keeping what I'm about to say a secret. But I want to tell you, if the unions didn't take it as a threat, then I'm not quite sure why I was speaking just a few weeks ago at the Ottawa Civic Centre to over 2,000 construction workers and leaders as they were briefed on what was going on and the threat that was facing them.

Make no mistake, there was a threat. The minister is trying his utmost, and his utmost is a fair degree, but he uses the word "conspiracy." Nobody on this side of the

House—certainly not me. I didn't hear any of my Liberal colleagues use the word "conspiracy." We didn't say "conspiracy." What we said was that you threatened the unions with arguably one of the most important clauses that exist in the Ontario Labour Relations Act. I see the parliamentary assistant shaking his head. Once again he knows everything so he doesn't need to listen. But the fact of the matter is that this government did threaten the labour movement in the construction industry with the removal of section 1(4) from the OLRA. You did.

Mr Gill: We showed them the difference.

Mr Christopherson: "We showed them the difference." Give me a break.

If you think this isn't true, then I wonder why there wasn't a letter to the editor regarding an article that Ian Urquhart wrote on March 15 of this year.

Mr Gill: Was that in the Toronto Star?

Mr Christopherson: I believe it was in the Hamilton Spectator actually, to be precise.

Mr Gill: The Toronto Star.

Mr Christopherson: If I can just point out once more, the parliamentary assistant says, "No, no, it has to be the Toronto Star." If you knew a little bit about the paper industry, or maybe you know as much about the newspaper industry as you do about labour, because the fact of the matter is, his column also appears in the Hamilton Spectator because they own it.

Mr Gill: Oh.

Mr Christopherson: "Oh," the member says. Maybe if you say less, listen more—

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Ian Urquhart wrote a column on March 15. I would contend that we all in this House from time to time have differences of opinion about the conclusions and analyses of Mr Urquhart. However, having said that, I'm not aware that anyone in this House is saying his facts aren't correct in terms of the factual content that Mr Urquhart reports. In fact, he is so concerned about that, as I see it, that often you'll see his own corrections where there has been a factual error that's been brought out. That's why I say we may all from time to time disagree with his analyses, but his facts are usually very accurate and he seems to care at a professional level about the accuracy of things he writes, and then takes personal responsibility for his own analyses and conclusions.

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He goes on to tell, March 15, the story of Geoff Smith, who is the chief spokesperson of the group of contractors who were pressuring the government to remove section 1(4). I should say, if I can just as an aside so we're all very clear, what 1(4) does primarily is prevent a construction company, a construction employer, from forming a shell company headed up in a lot of cases by brothers, wives, relatives who can be trusted. But what was really at play prior to 1(4) coming into law was that they tried to form what seemed to be for legal purposes a separate entity. However, in fact it was the same company, the same people, the same resources, the same

thinking, many times the same financial resources, and it was merely an attempt to get around their obligations under the collective agreement. It was a Tory government in the past that brought it in and said: "We're not going to allow that sort of thing because of all the turmoil it's causing in the province. It's not fair labour practice to allow that to happen, so we will put in" what became 1(4) which denied employers, and I'm not saying all employers but certainly those who wanted to skirt their obligations and get around the law, that opportunity which existed prior to 1(4).

Mr Urquhart on March 15 wrote this: "But the unionized general contractors are holding out for an unfettered right to double-breasting." Double-breasting is what happens when you remove 1(4) and see those shell companies start to be formed. "The chief spokesperson for the general contractors is Geoff Smith, president of Ellis-Don, the firm that built SkyDome and the Toronto-Dominion Centre.

"Smith's mother, Joan, was a minister of the Liberal cabinet of the 1980s and his father, Don, was the chief Liberal bagman. But in last year's provincial election, Geoff Smith switched sides and headed up a body called 'Liberals for Harris.' Smith says he was motivated by fiscal concerns and not a desire to gain influence with the Tories on labour law changes.

"Whether or not Smith was seeking a position of influence, he seems to have attained it. Earlier this month, he got in to see Premier Mike Harris on the double-breasting issue. Stockwell was not present."

So there we have the source of why this is even on the table. Did Minister Stockwell do a good job for the government and his cabinet colleagues and the Premier by virtue of pulling together the deal that seems at first blush—because I don't think the end of this story is written—to have a majority of the labour leaders and a majority of the contractors, particularly the subcontractors, onside with a single piece of legislation? To that degree, in terms of meeting the government's objective, which is, "Keep things as quiet as you can," he seems to have been successful.

That's why earlier I said I didn't have any problem with that. I understand those kinds of politics. That goes on with just about virtually every person in here in our own dynamic and I don't see anything evil in that or wrong or something that ought to be condemned. It's the nature of what we do. What I have a difficulty with is that the minister came forward today, and on the day he announced the introduction of Bill 69 or at least announced that he'd had agreement—that this was some kind of big victory for the workers. You'd almost think, listening to the minister, that the unions had been clamouring at the cabinet door for years and years, trying to get some government of the day to "Please lower our wages. Please make these changes because we know it's good for us and no government would listen." That is exactly the impression the minister leaves, that the unions wanted all these changes so bad, and the only problem was that they had to wait for the dissension from on high

of Chris Stockwell in the Mike Harris government. That is the impression they want to leave.

Nothing is further from the truth. Had this government not made it crystal-clear—and you did, you made it crystal-clear that you were going to pull 1(4) from the Ontario Labour Relations Act. Had you not made that threat, one for which there's ample evidence, given your past record, to believe you would do—and I might say you would probably do it with no public hearings, no committee debate, very little opposition debate and ram it through, just like you did virtually every other piece of legislation you've brought in here that hurts workers.

The minister would have us believe, now that we're debating this bill, that it's such a wonderful thing for the workers.

Mr Gill: It's the best thing that ever happened.

Mr Christopherson: Here we have the parliamentary assistant—I want that on the record—saying that's the best thing that ever happened. Boy, let's keep that for future reference.

I want to tell you, you'd have a whole different attitude from me—and I'm up front about the fact that my background prior to municipal politics is the labour movement, and for some of the members of the Liberal caucus it's similar—had the unions actually come to us as opposition members and said: "There are some things we want to get changed. We're not sure if we're going to make it or not. What we'd like to get is your support to encourage or pressure the government to make these changes if they won't, but we'd like you to join with us because we believe this would improve the working conditions and the benefits and the overall quality of life of our members." Had they come to us like that, they probably would have sent correspondence to the minister and then maybe or maybe not it would have begun the process of negotiations. That would have been negotiations.

But guess what? That also represents the kind of situation that exists here every day. We are constantly, especially in the NDP, pushing this government to put back in place rights that you took away. Why? Because the leadership of the very people you purport to care about in terms of what you're doing in Bill 69 are actually saying to us: "These things would benefit our members. Would you please take a look at it, and if you agree with it, would you join with us and add your political voice and strength to our pressure on the streets and to employers?"

That's the way most labour law that improves, legitimately improves, the conditions for workers takes place. Is that what has happened here? No. They loaded up this political gun and said, "Negotiate or else."

Anybody who wants to understand further—there are construction workers wondering what would have happened, and I want to be fair to those labour leaders who are faced with an incredible dilemma, a heart-rending one—take a look at the tape that the building trades produced very recently about what has happened in Alberta. They talk to actual workers out there, describe

the history of the labour legislation that was brought in and its impact on workers and their wages and their benefits and their working conditions. Watch it, listen to it and you'll understand at least some of the dynamics of what your leaders faced when they were told very clearly by this government, "Either you find some negotiated settlements that we can all live with or I'm going to pull 1(4) from the Ontario Labour Relations Act." If you have doubts and you're a construction worker, a family member or a friend of a construction worker, get a copy of that tape. There are lots of them around. That's what this union and that's what these workers were up against.

The minister used the word "uncompetitive" I don't know how many times. It's funny, though—and I realize that this is an extreme, but then you're an extreme—when you're talking about competitiveness, and things being uncompetitive, why does it never, ever enter your mind that maybe some of the non-union wages and benefits ought to be brought up to eliminate the uncompetitiveness, rather than saying those workers who through their unions have negotiated and struck and fought for those benefits should have to give them up? Why is it always a one-way street?

The minister was talking in his early remarks about the problems in the past, where there was strike after strike. That always leaves the impression, the way the right wing does that, that it's obviously the union that's the problem. If there's a strike, it's got to be the union's fault. There's a strike, there you go, it's self-evident. If there's a strike, it must be the union's fault. If there's a strike, the union and the workers must be being greedy and unreasonable; never an inkling that it might be the employer that's being unfair.

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I've sat at the negotiating table during the most difficult economic times, the downturn and the recession in the early 1980s, and let me tell you, it is not easy to even maintain the benefits you have when you're being threatened with job losses, plant closures, plant relocations and massive layoffs, and the economy reflects the situation where that may indeed be the case. In those early days in the early 1980s there were an awful lot of strikes that had nothing to do with getting more. They were about trying to hang on to what they already had in cases where the employer was using the circumstances to rip the collective agreement apart, not even a circumstance where there were legitimate problems. But again, to listen to the minister speak, you'd swear there were all these problems and they were all the fault of the evil unions, those workers wanting too much again.

The minister talked about fiddling while Rome burned. The fact of the matter is that it links up nicely with his other quote that I wrote down. That's when he was accusing previous governments, which is so—I can't even think of the word. It's so outlandish that he would try to paint this scenario. I realize he wasn't the minister, but he voted for these things when he was still in the government benches: Bill 7, Bill 15, all those things that took away workers' rights. So as the Minister of Labour

he can't very well say, "Don't blame me." He's now a member of that cabinet. He stands behind everything this government has done and is doing to workers.

In addition to accusing other governments of fiddling while Rome burned—remember, that's because we wouldn't do anything. He painted the picture that there were all these labour leaders pounding at the cabinet door wanting the kind of changes that are in Bill 69 but we wouldn't do it, therefore we were just fiddling while Rome burned. Then he said, "Show me anywhere where workers were gaining ground." Not too difficult at all; just go back to before Harris was in power, because under the previous government from 1990 to 1995, under the NDP government—

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: I know this is going to rile them, but you're going to have to listen to it anyway because it happens to be something you can't run away from—the truth. The truth is, I'll show the Minister of Labour for Mike Harris anywhere where workers were gaining ground. Under our government they gained ground. Scabs were finally outlawed in Ontario. That was a monumental day for workers in this province. You took it away from them. We funded the Workplace Health and Safety Agency. You killed it. For that matter, the Liberals ran on the same platform to kill it and the Liberals ran on a platform to undo our work on scabs too. So you're very similar in that vein.

We were the first government after 60 years—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Etobicoke North, the Minister of Agriculture and especially the member for Kitchener Centre, who is not in his seat, will not interrupt the member for Hamilton West.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that.

Continuing, for the first time in over 50 years an NDP government said to workers: "Guess what? WCB was created to help injured workers, not help the government or help employers. Therefore you ought to be entitled to half the seats on the board." We brought in legislation that gave workers or their representatives 50% of the seats on the board of directors of WCB. This government took them away.

We gave the public sector workers—this will really get them going—the same right that every other worker in this province has, with a few exceptions around essential services, and that is the democratic right to strike. We gave them that right. We did that.

I would remind members that I talked about a news conference that was held earlier this morning by the OFL, the United Food and Commercial Workers union and the farm workers union talking about the fact that under our legislation we gave workers who worked on industrial farms—and make no mistake, they are factories, by any definition, except they handle food, not steel or metal; they work in factory conditions—the democratic right to decide if they want to join a union or

not. They decided they did want to join a union. They were in the process, in fact, of negotiating their first collective agreement. When this government brought in Bill 7, they took away their rights, rights that they had under the law. Now, much to their credit, the United Food and Commercial Workers union, under the leadership of Mike Fraser, is taking this government all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, which has now agreed to hear the case.

Let me just say to Minister Stockwell, in case you're sitting in your office somewhere, there's somewhere where workers were gaining ground. They didn't start to lose ground until your colleague got elected and assumed power.

The minister also said, "Let's talk about content; let's not talk about process." I have talked about process and I think that there is at least a fair argument that you really can't look at this whole thing without understanding the situation that those labour leaders were put in. They weren't there finally seeing a government that would listen to them on things they wanted; they were there trying to hang on as best they could to the rights that their members were entitled to because of the decades of struggle that they fought, that they put everything on the line for and fought to get. That's why they were at that table. That's the kind of negotiation that was going on in this province.

The minister also went on to say—not today but at another time—"Let's be clear about this: Wages are going down." If anybody has any doubt about what the ultimate goal of the negotiations was, it was about responding to a hard, right-wing, ideological agenda that says, "We've got to get and keep wages down in this province as much as we can." That's what this government's been all about; unfortunately, I have to say, fairly successfully. But that does not make it right; that doesn't make it right at all.

The minister wants to talk about content. Let's talk about content. The minister talks about mobility. First of all, I'm not from the construction segment of the economy. It's something I've had to learn. I was a labour leader for quite a number of years, president of my local union, active on the Hamilton and District Labour Council. However, I was not from the construction industry. It's a very complex part of our economy—very complex—and I believe the minister has said that on different occasions himself. I don't profess to be an expert. I do have the benefit of listening to labour leaders who are experts and also beginning to receive some of their legal interpretations. Again, that is the kind of expert advice—and let me just say parenthetically that it's a shame this legislation is being moved on so quick. I can tell you that many of the unions are just now beginning to get the first drafts of the analyses that their legal people have done.

So on the issue of mobility, as I understand it, this applies to some unions to a far greater degree than others. Some have different rules at their hiring halls so some unions are going to be affected more than others by this

particular clause because, again, we're talking about the construction industry. It involves all the trades. As much as we often refer to construction as one homogeneous entity within the economy, within that construction label are a lot of different sectors and certainly a lot of different professions and trades and therefore different unions.

What Bill 69 would do is allow an employer to bring 40% of the workers they want from one location to another, outside one area. Then they would be allowed to what's called "name hire" the next 60%, meaning that they can pick the individuals they want, who they may have worked with before or they've heard good things about from another employer. So they could hand-pick; that's what it is. "Name hire" is what it's called. Therefore, only about 24% of the jobs that are being created in that particular community are going to go to the local community professionals.

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Now, before the parliamentary assistant jumps out of his skin trying to pucker up and say how wonderful this is, let me point out to him—

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I don't think he likes you.

Mr Christopherson: No less or more than many others, Janet. Need I say more?

I'll tell you what is of great concern, and I say this particularly to the ministers and the parliamentary assistant, in all seriousness. One of the concerns about so much flexibility on the part of employers—it may make for good business; I don't argue that point. However, there is a concern about the question of discrimination. Where we're concerned that it may discriminate—

Mr Gill: It's common sense.

Mr Christopherson: He doesn't want to listen.

Where there may be discrimination is against older workers. Many employers, given a choice between a bricklayer who is 55 or 25, without saying anything would follow human nature and say, "In terms of laying bricks there's a good chance I'm going to be able to get more bricks laid by a 25-year-old than a 55-year-old." Therefore, we run the real risk that older workers in these communities, given that we're down to 24%—and I understand in some trades the percentage is already lower or higher, but certainly in some situations this is new and it's not better.

What it means is an awful lot of older construction workers could be overlooked by employers because they don't have to take them. If you're in an industrial setting or a large workplace, that's prevented by seniority. As long as you're capable of doing the job and you have the seniority, by and large it's your job. This allows for potential abuse through discrimination.

How about someone who's a health and safety rep, an honourable position to have, working on behalf of your colleagues to make the workplace, in this case the construction site, as safe as it can be. But from an employer's perspective, what employer is going to knowingly pick someone and take them all the way

across the province if they know they're one of the best health and safety experts that the sheet metal workers have? What are the chances that person is going to be taken? What does that say? Well, in terms of your career as a carpenter or a sheet metal worker you might want to think twice about whether you want to get involved in health and safety. Is that not the opposite of what you profess to care about? I would say the same about union stewards. If there's an opportunity to overlook a union steward, I suspect a lot of employers will. They're not going to want to take that person with them; they would see it as bringing trouble from one location to another. In many cases this means there are going to be fewer community people being hired, that fewer tradespeople are going to get hired in a local community. If you're an older worker who happens to be a health and safety rep or a steward, or if you're used to selecting most of your jobs from the local hiring hall, you're going to be in serious trouble, and some of those workers who have worked the longest, the ones who have contributed the most to building Ontario, raised their families, all the things this government says they care about—you may indeed be hurting them.

I say to the minister, in terms of content, motivation aside, this is not some wonderful piece of news for an awful lot of constructions workers, because they're going to lose rights or opportunities they previously had, and that ought to be a concern that all the members have, particularly the cabinet ministers and the parliamentary assistant who are here tonight. I think that's a legitimate concern that you need to address and that deserves addressing.

I really only have a couple of minutes. Mr Speaker, both of the other issues I'm going to get into will take me much longer. I think I would be serving all our interests if I did one thing before I do what you're hoping I will do in terms of shutting down the House. I would seek unanimous consent to allow the conclusion of my leadoff debate to be picked up at another time.

The Acting Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

It being 9:30 of the clock, or thereabouts, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2126.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
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Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay- Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
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		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

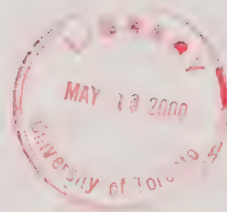
Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 2 May 2000

Mardi 2 mai 2000



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 2 mai 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): Today I want to speak about an announcement by Mike Harris last week to introduce private universities to Ontario. I want to tell the people who live in my riding of Windsor West that I am opposed to this announcement. Moreover, I want to ask the parents in my riding to answer the very question that the Minister of Colleges and Universities put to parents last week during that announcement of private universities. When at the end of that press conference a student asked the minister, "Where are we going to find \$40,000 a year to attend this so-called private university?" it said, and I quote, "She snapped, 'Ask your parents.'"

I say to the people who live in my riding, even if we have a four-year program, we're talking about \$160,000, which is about the cost many people will spend on a home. I want to ask these parents on behalf of the Minister of Colleges and Universities, where are we going to get that kind of money to send our students to these so-called private universities?

It's just one more example of how the Tories find the easy way out instead of addressing real issues about college and university education for our young people in Ontario. I am opposed to moving to private universities and think instead that you should get back down to basics, roll up your sleeves and figure out exactly how you want to better fund our post-secondary education.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to remind the opposition of our government's unprecedented record of following through on its commitments.

The Ontario economy has created more than 701,000 net new jobs since the throne speech in September 1995. In 1999, over 99% of the 198,000 net new jobs were full-time jobs and the majority were jobs in the high-paying sector.

I want to congratulate the taxpayers of Ontario for putting their faith in this government's promises that tax cuts create jobs and improve our economy.

It is also worth noting that more than 485,000 people have stopped relying on welfare since June 1995. These facts alone are something to be proud of.

Later this afternoon, the Minister of Finance is expected to announce a balanced budget. The opposition, the critics and many journalists said it couldn't be done, and while Ontario fell behind, thanks to the poor performance of the NDP and the Liberals, Ontario has now managed to bounce back, thanks to the dedicated efforts of the Harris team. Over the past five years, the people of Ontario have received more political stability, financial security and a better justice system.

Just as Sir John A. Macdonald encouraged his associates to look ahead for Canada, this government has moved forward and created a better and brighter future for all who call Ontario their home.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise today to express the concern of my constituents regarding school closures slated for June 2000 and June 2001.

As a result of this government's stupid funding policy and space allocation policy, schools in the city of Hamilton, particularly schools in the inner city that are the heart and soul of our community, are being forced to close, are going to be on the chopping block, not because the trustees want to, not because the parents want to, but because Mike Harris's funding policy is forcing these.

Three such schools are Parkview secondary, Lloyd George elementary and Scott Park secondary in my riding. Of these schools, particularly Scott Park high school with about 800 students in the heart of Hamilton East, in the heart of the community, is not only a school but is the heart and soul of our community. It is the recreation centre, it is the place where parents meet and it is the place where students go in the evening. It is the real heart of our community, and this government is going to shut it down. Lloyd George elementary school, in the north end of Hamilton, is a small school but one that has come together, one that keeps that community together, one that becomes in the evening the main centre of the neighbourhood.

This government, because of your stupid policy—irrational, not well-thought-out—is going to force these schools to close. You can't blame the trustees; you can't blame the parents. The blame is clearly on Mike Harris and his funding policy that is forcing many inner-city schools to close. You're going to pay a hell of a political price for this come next election.

ONTARIO VOLUNTEER AWARDS 2000

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Tonight I will attend the Ontario Volunteer Awards 2000. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the outstanding achievement of those individuals from my riding of York North who will be honoured tonight.

Nominated by the Bellhaven Women's Institute are June Fairburn, Edna May, Ruth Mondy, Helen Pegg and Phyllis Yorke; nominated by the Family Life Centre is Cyril Harper; nominated by Gymnastics Ontario is Teresa Orr; nominated by the Lake Simcoe South Master Gardeners are Joyce Cathcart, Albert Evans, James Pickering and Audrey Whitcombe; nominated by the Sandgate Women's Shelter is Dorothy Perry; nominated by the Union Street Women's Institute are Olive Hant, Joyce Karges, Flossie Martin and Ida Morin; nominated by the Unionville Home Society is Barbara Houston; nominated by the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum is Ruth Pogue; nominated by the Women's Sexual Assault Helpline and Outreach Services of York Region is Judy Konaka; nominated by the York 4-H Club are Doug Johnson and Mike Winch; nominated by the York Holstein Club is Alan Faris; nominated by the York North chapter of the MS Society is Patricia Robichaud; nominated by the York Region Rose of Sharon Services for Young Mothers are Christine Kalan-Tidman and Terry Kelly Anderson.

I would like to thank all of these volunteers for making the riding of York North a better place to live.

APPOINTMENT OF
JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I want to use my time today to direct an appeal to the Attorney General related to the lack of resident justice-of-the-peace services in the town of Marathon.

For the past three years, Marathon Mayor Pat Richardson and I have been lobbying this government to fill the vacancy left when the previous Marathon justice retired in 1995. We've written several letters over that period of time and have tried to co-operate with the ministry in every possible way to help them once again provide this important service.

As you know, Marathon is the largest community on the north shore of Lake Superior between Thunder Bay and Sault Ste Marie and, as such, has an extremely busy court docket. Yet, while most other communities in my riding have at least part-time resident JPs, Marathon has only received the services of a travelling justice of the peace.

Minister, your refusal to appoint a resident justice of the peace for Marathon is most difficult to understand. It is forcing members of the OPP detachment in Marathon to travel to either Manitouwadge or Schreiber, each approximately 100 kilometres away, to get the signature of a JP, which means more costs for taxpayers and the loss of that officer from his or her regular duties. As for

the travelling justice of the peace, many planned visits to Marathon have had to be cancelled because of road closures and weather-related problems which have caused unnecessary and costly delays in the delivery of justice.

Minister, perhaps your lack of understanding of our northern reality has caused you to delay making this appointment. Regardless, it is important for you to delay no further. Marathon is an important, vibrant community that requires this service. Please fill the vacancy now.

1340

CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I rise today to bring to the attention of the House and people across the province the excellent work and contribution of the Canadian Hearing Society to our communities and to this province over some 60 years now.

In my own community yesterday, I participated in a celebration in the Station Mall, where people gathered who have helped with the Canadian Hearing Society work over a number of years to celebrate this 60th anniversary and to talk about the wonderful things that have been done in Sault Ste Marie, Algoma and across this province by so many people who are committed to such a positive effort on behalf of those who are deaf or deafened or hard of hearing in the province: The contribution they make, creating possibilities for people to participate in communities, working on issues of access—in my own community, for example, participating with the hospitals to make sure that people who have a challenge in terms of hearing and go to the hospital are able to express themselves, get the service they need and to go away well taken care of.

I dare say that in this place, we saw the work of the Canadian Hearing Society in the election of one Gary Malkowski to the Legislature in 1990, a deaf person who served here in a magnificent way, both as a role model and a trailblazer for those in this province who, up to then, may have felt that acting as a member of parliament was out of their realm.

TELEMARKETING PRACTICES

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I want to bring to the Legislature's attention concerns I have about local consumer complaints of telephone or mail scams and unscrupulous salespeople who mostly prey on seniors. I recently met with a constituent, Mr William Lamacraft, to discuss a situation he experienced with a package he received in the mail, announcing that he had just become the winner of \$1.8 million. Of course, after sending in appropriate forms no prize or money was ever received. It was yet another magazine subscription scam.

While I appreciate the visit from Mr Lamacraft, I'm quite disappointed that consumers in my riding, especially the vulnerable and elderly, are targets of many illegitimate and fraudulent companies. Last year at my seniors seminar, I heard many complaints about vacuum

cleaner, gas and other door-to-door salespeople, who are often too pushy and unclear about what consumers are really buying.

The Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations has been very proactive in keeping consumers aware and informed of telephone scams and who to contact with a complaint. I urge anyone with concerns to contact the ministry's general inquiry unit for information on a variety of consumer issues or to report a scam. The 1-800-268-1142 number is just for that reason.

I applaud the government's efforts to this end, and I thank Mr Lamacraft for bringing his concerns to my attention in order to promote awareness in our community.

ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): Comme tout le monde le sait, aujourd'hui le gouvernement Harris présente un budget équilibré, le premier depuis une décennie, le premier depuis l'année 1989-1990, la dernière année du gouvernement libéral à l'époque.

Il est important de noter que ce gouvernement a finalement atteint son objectif, trois ans après le gouvernement fédéral et après plusieurs autres provinces, qui ne jouissaient pas d'une situation économique aussi favorable que la nôtre.

This government has already allocated most of the surplus, with the majority going to tax cuts and with little directed towards health, education and debt reduction.

Par contre, une partie du surplus devrait être dirigée vers les intérêts des communautés francophones. Ce gouvernement devrait prendre les démarches nécessaires afin de rencontrer les besoins de ses citoyens et de ses citoyennes et de garantir des services municipaux de qualité en français, surtout pour les villes d'Ottawa et de Sudbury.

It is imperative that this government recognize the linguistic duality of this province.

On ne peut se permettre de se diriger vers un système de santé à deux paliers, une éducation seulement accessible aux riches et un manque de respect pour les composantes culturelles et communautaires de cette province. Les Conservateurs doivent reconnaître l'importance de ces domaines au lieu de les remettre au contrôle du secteur privé.

Ce gouvernement ne doit pas se vanter d'un budget équilibré ou d'un surplus. L'étude de n'importe quel domaine—éducation, santé, services sociaux, logement subventionné—nous révèle que les obligations n'ont pas été rencontrées et que les gens ne reçoivent pas les services nécessaires.

In reality, this government is in a deficit situation. What is the use of a tax cut if the people of this province are hit with user fees? The citizens are now paying more and receiving less.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Today, May 2, is Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom ha-Shoah, in Ontario. On this day, all Ontarians come together to remember all victims of state-sanctioned genocide. Here, on the threshold of the 21st century, we need to remind ourselves that many instances of this most horrible crime have occurred in modern times.

Remember, not all victims of these crimes are dead. Many survivors of genocide walk amongst us. Some choose to bear their pain in silence, while others have taken up the clarion call of "Never again." They chose to shed the glare of their experience on these acts rather than remain silent about them.

We need to remember such horrors because, in the modern world, we are not immune. Our horror, our indignation and our belief in a better world are not enough to shield us from these horrors.

Witness Zimbabwe today. Formerly Rhodesia, this African nation is spiralling dangerously close to genocide. An emphasis on the responsibilities of citizenship is our only defence against man's inhumanity to man. When a state sanctions this type of action, it is up to the citizens who make up that state, and indeed all citizens of the world, to stand in their place and say no. This heroic act is a defence of freedom and cannot be ignored.

Today, as we remember, we neither can be ignored.

REPORT OF CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that I've laid upon the table a report to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled Meeting the Needs of a Modern Electorate, submitted by the chief election officer for Ontario.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: Earlier today I wrote you a letter with respect to the report that you have just placed on the table. Pursuant to standing order 21, I filed notice with you about this. We became aware that copies of the report from the chief election officer entitled Meeting the Needs of a Modern Electorate were in circulation prior to being tabled in the House. Indeed, they were circulated, by our understanding, to the media a full three weeks ago.

The Election Finances Act:

"2(4) The chief election officer shall make an annual report on the affairs of his or her office in relation to this act to the Speaker of the Assembly...."

"2(6) The Speaker shall lay annual reports received under subsection (4) and recommendations received under subsection (5) before the Assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The Election Act further states:

"4.1(4) Within 12 months after polling day, the chief election officer shall (a) make a report to the Speaker of the Assembly on the voting equipment, vote-counting equipment or alternative voting methods used at the elec-

tion; and (b) make recommendations to the Speaker with respect to amending this act so as to adopt the voting equipment, vote-counting equipment or alternative voting methods on a permanent basis."

I believe that the failure to table this report before the House and distributing it to the public has violated our standing orders and the rights and privileges of this House collectively.

Mr Speaker, I would ask you to rule on that issue.

The Speaker: I thank the member very much for giving me the point of privilege. I will be investigating and will be coming up with a ruling. I want to thank the member for taking the time and laying it out in a very concise manner. I will be ruling. I thank the member for his point of privilege.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr David Young (Willowdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe I have unanimous consent from all of the parties for one member of each caucus to speak for up to five minutes on Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Young: Last night at sundown Jews around the world lit memorial candles in observance of Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day, which honours the six million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis during the Second World War. It is truly difficult to find words to put this tragedy into any sort of perspective.

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Coming to terms with the loss of a single loved one is immensely difficult. How unimaginable, then, it must be for the survivors of the Holocaust, who in an instant—overnight—lost an entire community, their family, their friends, their neighbours, all to unspeakable hatred. It is with this in mind that we pause today to honour the memory of those innocents who could not escape the clutches of genocide in the last century. We pause to honour those who valiantly fought this tyranny. We pause to honour those individuals with us today who survived. It is for them that we commemorate Yom ha-Shoah.

By officially recognizing Holocaust Memorial Day in this Legislature, we honour those Holocaust victims, and we honour the survivors, many of whom settled in Ontario where they have rebuilt their lives. They have become our friends, they have become our neighbours, they're mothers, fathers, and they've contributed to the richness and the diversity and the compassion that has become synonymous with the name Canada and with this great province. They are shining examples of the enduring strength of human spirit, and we remain inspired by their will, not just to survive but to live.

Earlier today, the Premier and Minister Johns, Member Chudleigh, Member Kwinter and Member Colle joined with myself and the families of 13 Holocaust survivors who are in the gallery today. The 13 have dis-

tinguished themselves in various ways on numerous occasions since they graced our country by immigrating here.

These people are Dubie Arie; Jerry Matta; Betty Kirshenbaum; Izzy Kirshenbaum; Elsa Chandler, with whom I served six years on the North York Board of Education, a dear friend; Olly Mittleman; Cantor Joseph Cooper; Max Moneta; Sally Eisner; Cantor Martin Rosenbaum; Morris Leider; Izzy Light; and Bella Snow is with us as well today on behalf of her late husband, Ralph, who recently and tragically passed away.

The Holocaust has left its mark on all of us. Every Jew knows someone who has perished and did perish in those dark days of the last century. My family is no exception. As a youngster I grew up in a community where it was common to have adults with numbers tattooed on their arms. These marks remained as painful reminders of the concentration camp and the tyrant's maniacal attempt to eliminate a people.

Even more painful for these survivors were the memories of seeing loved ones snatched away and then murdered. I grew up in a community where distant relatives and friends were called aunts and uncles and brothers and sisters because for many families there were no blood relatives left after the Holocaust. The sorrow of these victims is carried constantly in our hearts and the cries of the victims will echo forever in our souls.

As time passes, there remain fewer and fewer survivors, and without their presence among us it might be all too easy to forget the horrors they faced. We must never forget. We must never forget the atrocities which were endured during the Second World War, because by keeping their memory alive, we foster the hope that no community will ever again experience such atrocities. Yet atrocities, tragedies in Africa and eastern Europe in recent years demonstrate that we still have much to learn. We must continue our vigil to ensure that no tyrant will ever again inflict such unspeakable horror and suffering on any group of human beings regardless of their race, their religion, their way of life or where they live.

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): Today is the 27th day of Nissan in the year 5760 of the Hebrew calendar. It is Yom ha-Shoah, Vehagvurah, Holocaust Memorial Day. It is a day that commemorates not only the Holocaust, but also the anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in 1943 and the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

On December 10, 1998, this Legislature passed Bill 66 in the name of the member for Halton, and that bill proclaimed that we, the province of Ontario, would recognize the Holocaust Memorial Day, the first jurisdiction outside of the state of Israel to do so. With that we have really passed a law, and what it does is call for the enhancement of Holocaust and anti-discrimination education, which will enrich our Ontario heritage and mosaic.

This is probably the 15th time I have stood in this House on this issue, and it's a challenge because I want to make it an educational experience for all of us. Historians once commented that a people's ability to assimilate

very serious problems is predicated on, if one person dies, it's a tragedy, but if thousands or millions of people die, it's a statistic; you cannot come to grips with it. I want to talk about a situation where during the Holocaust we had six million Jews die, and of that 1.5 million were children. While this was happening the world was silent. There was no outcry; there was no comment; there was silence.

Let me give you an example of what happened in June 1939. Adolf Hitler designated that 1,000 Jews could leave Europe to go to any country that would take them. He had them put aboard a vessel known as the SS St Louis and off they went. They were under the impression they were going to Cuba. When they arrived in Havana, thinking this was going to be their salvation, they were refused permission to leave the ship. After much negotiation they had to leave. Every other country in South America refused.

They then went to the United States. Not only did the United States refuse to allow them to land, but it sent out a gunboat to make sure none of them got off the boat and swam to shore. They then went to Canada and pleaded with the then Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, saying: "Please, you are our last refuge of hope. Let us in." The answer was no. They said, "By saying no, you are passing a death sentence on us." The ship returned to Europe and historically the facts are that most of those people died in the Holocaust, and again the world was silent.

I want to compare that to a situation we're living in right now. Six million die, 1.5 million children: Every day, as we heard today in the ceremony that honoured 13 people, was a choice between life and death at the whim of the Nazis who were there: You go to the right, you're alive; you go to the left, you're dead. Every day was a challenge. Today in the Western world, in the United States, we have a little boy, Elian Gonzales, who came to the United States and brought the power of the President of the United States, brought the power of the Attorney General, brought the world's global media. What is the issue? It is, where is he going to live? It is not, is he going to live, but where? That is the issue that is gripping the media today.

You have to ask, what has changed, what has gone on? This is what we really have to remember: We have to come to terms with the fact that there are parts of our history where things have been done to people for the reason, particularly in the Holocaust, that their only crime was that they were Jewish.

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One other example: After the war, all of the remnants of this Jewish community were trying to get placed. They were all in displaced persons camps and they were trying to be placed in countries. A senior official in the Canadian Ministry of Immigration was asked, "How many Jews are you prepared to take?" He said, "None is too many." Now what has happened, of course, is we've had an incredible sea change. We've had an enlightened society, an enlightened country. I can tell you that when you take

a look at Canadian society, members of the Jewish community are in every stratum—in the arts, in the sciences, in the business community—and that is commendable. But it is important to understand that literally within the lifetime of many of us we've lived through a part of our history in which a total nation was virtually annihilated.

There were some, and they're counted among the righteous—whether it be Oskar Schindler and his Schindler Juden, or Raul Wallenberg, who, because he was a Swedish diplomat, helped the people in Hungary—who did help. But by and large the world was silent. It is that message and it's for that reason that we must always remember so that the world will never forget.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): As Mr Kwinter has said, Yom ha-Shoah falls on May 2, which is today, and it's more than appropriate that we're making the comments that are being made today. It is clearly a day of reflection and of remembering the systematic, bureaucratic annihilation of six million Jews by the Nazi regime. But it is also important to remember our role as a government, to the extent that we did very little as Canadians to accept Jews who were desperately seeking a place in this country. That's our role and that's the responsibility we have to take as Canadians, as part of that remembering.

I would add that although the Jews were the primary victims, up to 500,000 Roma people—Gypsies—and at least 250,000 mentally or physically disabled persons were also victims of genocide.

"As Nazi tyranny spread across Europe from 1933 to 1945, millions of other innocent people were persecuted and murdered. More than three million Soviet prisoners of war were killed because of their nationality. Poles, as well as other Slavs, were targeted for slave labour, and as a result of the Nazi terror, almost two million perished. Homosexuals and others deemed antisocial were also persecuted and often murdered. In addition thousands of political and religious dissidents such as communists, socialists, trade unionists and Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted for their beliefs and behaviour and many of these individuals died as a result of maltreatment."

The issue of human rights and violations of human dignity is as much a local problem as it is a global problem. Although it might be convenient for people to say violations happen somewhere else, it's good to remember what happens in our borders and in our own country, because that's where it should begin in terms of dealing with our own problems. So simply remembering violations, in my view, is not a solution. Unless we commit to proactively and not reactively work against racism and human rights violations, these abuses will persist inexorably and universally.

We must meet this challenge not as taxpayers but as citizens. Education is part of that prevention; it's part of that solution. I refer to this Yom ha-Shoah Holocaust Memorial Day teachers' guide. It's where it begins. It begins with education and in our education system. This is what they say in the part that says, "Why teach Holocaust history?"

"Through a study of the Holocaust, students can come to realize that (1) democratic institutions and values are not automatically sustained but need to be appreciated, nurtured and protected; (2) silence and indifference to the suffering of others, or to the infringement of civil rights in any society can—however unintentionally—serve to perpetuate the problems; and (3) the Holocaust was not an accident in history—it occurred because individuals, organizations and governments made choices which not only legalized discrimination, but which allowed prejudice, hatred and ultimately mass murder to occur. ...

"A study of the Holocaust helps students think about the use and abuse of power, and the role and responsibilities of individuals, organizations and nations when confronted with civil rights violations and/or policies of genocide."

In my view, remembering must involve the active engagement of citizens to confront and stamp out acts of racism and human rights violations everywhere.

The Speaker: I thank all the members.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I have a question for the Chair of Management Board in regard to the Ontario Realty Corp. I'm going to ask simple, straightforward questions without any rhetoric and I would hope that the answers from the minister are also in kind with that.

Yesterday, my leader, Dalton McGuinty, asked the Premier whether the taxpayers of Ontario had received any additional funding as a result of the property that was added to the Etobicoke crematorium deal. You've had 24 hours to look into this matter. Can you confirm today for the House whether the taxpayers of Ontario received any additional funding for the 25-foot strip that was added to the crematorium deal in Etobicoke?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The member of the opposition knows full well, or he should know, that this particular past transaction is under review by the auditors and is being investigated by the police, and that's where it should be dealt with.

Mr Agostino: It was a simple question—it had nothing to do with the police investigation—whether or not, for the additional 25 feet, the taxpayers of Ontario were compensated. I'm disappointed the minister would choose not to answer that question.

Minister, on November 3, 1999, you were asked whether you were aware of any allegations of corruption or wrongdoing at the Ontario Realty Corp. You replied that there were no specific allegations of corruption or wrongdoing that you were made aware of. Can you confirm for the House the date you first were made aware of any corruption or wrongdoing at the ORC, and at

which board meeting you and the board were notified of wrongdoing at the Ontario Realty Corp?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I've outlined to this House before, it was early November when I was asked by the opposition if I had any specific knowledge of any allegations. I said I didn't have anything specific and if they had some information, would they please share it? They refused to or they felt they didn't need to. I'll let the public draw its own conclusions why they didn't offer any specific evidence of what they were alleging.

In late November, the review team of the senior management of the ORC discovered some irregularities and they asked for the Management Board auditor to have a look at it. He looked at it, he asked for assistance with outside forensic accountants. They referred the matter subsequently to the police and the police are now investigating it.

Mr Agostino: Finally, a question: Other than the Etobicoke crematorium deal, have you had any business dealings with Mr Damiani either as a minister or in the private business sector that you were involved in previous to public life?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I don't know what it is. Either the Liberals are so arrogant that they think they can do a better job investigating than the police or they just don't trust the police. Which is it?

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FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Attorney General. It's about the serious issue of fat cat deadbeats who live in the lap of luxury while refusing to make custodial payments. The mom can't pay the rent and the kids don't have food on the table. In addition to going after drivers' licences, why don't we go after them where it hurts the most? What I'm talking about is taking away these fat cats' ability to practise in their professions, so it would be a letter from the Family Responsibility Office to a self-regulating body such as the law society or the College of Physicians and Surgeons. They'd get the final discretion, but you'd advise them that this fat-cat lawyer, for instance, is a deadbeat, not making custodial payments, that their behaviour is unbecoming to the profession and therefore they should be suspended from practising. What do you say, Minister? Are you willing to go after the fat-cat deadbeats who are victimizing thousands of Ontarians?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As I think the member knows, the Family Responsibility Office in Ontario has been suspending drivers' permits at record rates in the past year. Almost 15,000 delinquent payers have been sent notices of impending driver's licence suspensions since 1997, and more than 6,200 delinquent payers have had their drivers' licences suspended, resulting in more than \$40 million in support being paid to children and families.

We are using the enforcement tools at the Family Responsibility Office that this Legislative Assembly authorized in the legislation that was passed here a few years ago. We are collecting record sums for the spouses and children in Ontario who are entitled to those payments.

Mr Bryant: Minister, suspending a driver's licence is a start, but it's not going to help if the fat-cat deadbeat is riding around in the back of a limo. We need to hit him where it hurts. I'm surprised that you're not open to initiatives from this side of the House, and I understand that you're not open to initiatives from this side of the House, but I encourage you to reconsider this. I would be remiss if I didn't pursue you to make a commitment to go after these fat cats and do something about the problem.

I've got another question and I am seeking an unequivocal answer. This is an important issue for those Ontarians who are victims of deadbeat dads. Will you stand up and say that you will not in any way, shape or form privatize the FRO?

Hon Mr Flaherty: In terms of being open to initiatives, it was our government that brought in the seizure of passports, that brought in the seizure of drivers' licences. It was our government, in 1996, that introduced the legislation. It was your government, for five years, that let FRO get into all kinds of difficulty in terms of performing its function of collecting money for children and spouses in Ontario.

If the member wants to talk about initiatives and being imaginative and using the tools we can use to effectively collect money for vulnerable people, that's exactly what our government has done in the last five years in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): It would have been nice if the minister had answered my colleague's question, and it leaves it open that there is privatization being proposed.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member take his seat. Order, member for Windsor-St Clair. The member is trying to put the final supplementary.

Mr Peters: I have in my hand copies of memos from the Ministry of Community and Social Services regarding social assistance and the Family Responsibility Office. Since December 1998, both your ministry and the Ministry of Community and Social Services have been trying to figure out a way to deal with 31,500 files whose FRO assignments are still with the Ministry of Community and Social Services instead of the local delivery agent. What we have here is that for 16 months Ontario caseworkers across the province have not had access to their FRO files. Caseworkers were instructed not to change their clients' support assignments because your ministry did not have the manpower to deal with it at the time. Municipalities were told that it would be dealt with somewhere down the road. Now, 16 months later, we are somewhere down the road and municipalities are going to be reimbursed on a nominal averaging formula

because, "It was not feasible to use the automated approach."

Minister, this black hole, as your own staff have referred to it, is appalling. Why are you starving the FRO to the point where possibly there are more than 30,000 screwed-up files and hundreds of millions of dollars sitting in the consolidated revenue fund. When are you going to take responsibility, Minister, and clean up this mess that you call the Family Responsibility Office?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I'm disappointed, actually, that the member would criticize the Family Responsibility Office and the workers who work there, who work on the phones every day trying to do a good and effective job on behalf of children and spouses who are entitled to payment. Frankly, I think their work should be praised; it's extremely difficult work. The province is paying \$28 million or so this year to fund this work on behalf of those persons entitled to that money, whose marriages have broken down. I think we should encourage them in their work. We should give them the tools they need to effectively do their work, which we have done with driver's licence suspensions and by interfering with the passports of persons who would flee their obligations. These are positive moves; this is moving forward. If you have suggestions that will help us forward, I'd love to hear them.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is to the Minister of Correctional Services. He will be aware that there was quite a discussion at municipal council in Sault Ste Marie last night as they attempted to respond to a letter from you recently to clarify their position re two resolutions they passed over the last couple of months. One was to have the Northern Treatment Centre continue to be a part of our community, and the other was their concern about the privatization of correctional services in this province. Last night they clarified their positions. They do not see those two resolutions as being mutually exclusive and have stayed with their position.

What they want me to ask you today, Minister, is to perhaps clarify your position in terms of what is driving your agenda. Is it, as you say in the letter, an effort to provide "safe, secure, efficient and effective correctional programming," or is it an agenda driven by the politics of your government's wanting to privatize as much as they can of the correctional system in this province, even to the point of denying the voice of duly elected municipal councils such as the one in Sault Ste Marie?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I think I have been quite clear in the discussions we've had, either privately or publicly, that we are quite interested in making sure we have programs in this province that deliver effective results as far as correcting the behaviour of the individuals who go through these various programs is concerned.

The Northern Treatment Centre deals with a particular type of behavioural challenge that the inmates have. The member will know that I visited that program with him in the fall of last year to get a first-hand view of what that institution was doing and how it was able, in their view, to benefit the inmates who spend some time there. The member will also know that the federal Liberal government has decided not to continue its involvement in that program. Currently it is a joint venture between us and the federal corrections department. They have chosen not to participate. I have indicated to the member that we certainly do want to take a look at encouraging great programs, and if that's one of them, we would like to continue it.

Mr Martin: Minister, I thank you for that answer and for the effort you have made over the last number of months since you have been minister to work with me on the very important issue of saving the Northern Treatment Centre for Sault Ste Marie and for the province. However, in reading the letter last night and listening to the discussion at the municipal council and talking to some folks over the weekend, because the letter was in the package on Friday for the agenda for Monday night, there was some concern that there was an element of coercion and intimidation in this, and indeed the term "blackmail" was used.

Was that in any way, shape or form a right perception? Is that in fact what you were attempting to do in sending that letter, and will that in any way be the tone of the decision-making you will now be wanting to enter into as you make decisions about this important facility and Sault Ste Marie over the next few days?

1420

Hon Mr Sampson: The honourable member asks what our intentions are. I think the intentions are quite clear: to run safe, effective, efficient and accountable correctional facilities not only in Sault Ste Marie but throughout the entire province. In most of the communities I have visited, when you speak to the residents and the people who work within the institutions, they are concerned about those very same issues: the safety of these institutions—the safety of those outside and of those who work inside—the effectiveness and efficiency, and the recidivism rates we may or may not be achieving in the various institutions across the province.

I was hoping council was considering that when they considered resolutions that dealt with the institutions that were then in their backyard, as the Sault Ste Marie resolution appeared to have done. I wrote to them and said, "Please clarify for me: Are you, as I am, concerned about safety, security, effectiveness and efficiency, or are you, council, taking an ideological position that relates to who operates these things, regardless of what the outcome is?"

Mr Martin: Minister, if you are suggesting here today that what they are doing is driven by ideological concerns, that is not the nature and the makeup of the council of Sault Ste Marie. It is a very diverse group of political folks, and all they were trying to say to you very

clearly in their freely elected way is that they want the Northern Treatment Centre to stay in Sault Ste Marie and they have a concern about the privatization of corrections in the province. They wanted that message to be sent to you and your government on behalf of the community.

Minister, will you tell us today what your plans are and what they will be re the Northern Treatment Centre and Sault Ste Marie?

Hon Mr Sampson: Again, my plans are quite clear. I have said many times in this House and outside of this House that the plan of this minister and of this government is to have a safe, effective, efficient and publicly accountable correctional system in this province. We need to have that system, because we don't have it now and we need to find ways to get there. If we can get there with the assistance of private operators, we should take a look at that. And that indeed is what we are doing. Quite clearly, our objectives are a safe, secure, effective and efficient correctional system and one that's publicly accountable. I believe, from what I'm hearing from you today, that those are the identical concerns of council, and I'm glad you raised those in the House today.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): My question is for the minister responsible for disability issues. As I am sure you're aware, a new federal study shows that disabled women in Ontario are more likely than disabled men to be sucked into a downward spiral of loneliness and poverty. The study paints a bleak picture of life as a disabled woman. They are less likely to find paying jobs, and those who do work are paid such low wages that they are forced to turn to charities or food banks.

Minister, when your government took office you took away the Employment Equity Act, which the NDP brought in to help these very people. But at least you promised to bring in an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. To date you've reneged on that promise time and time again, and you're doing it now.

Will you stand in your place today and tell us you are going to bring in the much-promised Ontarians with Disabilities Act today or in the very near future?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): Let me tell you that this government has been very clear about its intention to bring forward a disability act. As you know from your time in the House, Mr Speaker, the NDP had a private member's bill that they put forward and didn't even act on that during their time. This government has been very clear. In the throne speech we said we would bring forward an action plan in this session. We also said, on an opposition day, that we would have legislation by November 2001. We stick to our word.

Ms Churley: Another empty promise. We shall see, won't we? I will say to the minister and to all the

members of this government that when they get up and say the NDP did nothing—let me refresh your memory. We brought in an Employment Equity Act, which would help the very people we are talking about today. You guys went out in an election and distorted the facts about that act, and told people, “Be afraid; it’s quota.” Then you got into government and got rid of it. You at least promised to do something to help disabled people in replacement of that and you did nothing. Two thousand and one is not good enough. Since the Employment Equity Act disappeared, people have been waiting five years for action from this government. The time is now. This is unacceptable and a disgrace. Ontario’s economy is booming and these people are being left at the back of the line.

Minister, tell us here today that you will bring in a meaningful and effective ODA, which you promised more than five years ago, before 2001. I would say, bring it in next week. The time has come.

Hon Mrs Johns: I’d like to make a couple of comments about that. When the election was going on, the NDP and the Liberals said they could do it in two and three years, respectively. We have said that we would move quickly on that, that we would move to create an Ontarians with Disabilities Act within the goalposts of the Common Sense Revolution.

Let’s look at this study. I think it’s important to recognize that the study was done between 1991 and 1996, when the NDP was in power. Since the time of the Mike Harris government, the economy is booming—you’re right—and I think we’ll see today in the budget just how wonderful the economy is and just how this government has brought forward a great—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Today marks a significant anniversary for a number of our colleagues in the House. On May 2, 1985, five of our colleagues were first elected to the Legislature, and I think we ought to pay tribute to the members for Scarborough-Rouge River, York Centre, Timiskaming-Cochrane, Mississauga South and Burlington. That was a day that many of us refer to as a time when the great darkness was lifted.

The Speaker: That’s not a point of order, but I’m sure all the members are very pleased to be here.

New question. Start the clock, please.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a question for the Premier. In the Blueprint document it stated, “For too long, the criminal justice system treated victims of crime as an afterthought.”

A constituent of mine, Mr Robert Monforton, has written to you about his particular circumstances. Mr Monforton was left a quadriplegic as a result of a crime that was committed in 1971. As of yesterday, Mr Monforton’s benefits under the Criminal Injuries Com-

pensation Board were eliminated because he had hit the lifetime maximum. We have written to you to ask if your government will consider changing the act that governs this. Premier, will you give an undertaking to victims of crime, particularly Mr Monforton, that this case will be reviewed?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Attorney General has some information on this case.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the honourable member for Windsor-St Clair for the question. He and I have discussed this matter before and he has asked me about it before in the House.

I understand, as the member has indicated, that the decision of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board has been issued. The Compensation for Victims of Crime Act, as the member knows, sets a quarter-million-dollar cap on the total amount any eligible person can receive in a lifetime. That was the limit that was agreed to, as I understand it, with the support of all three parties in the late 1980s in this place.

There has been a hearing and there has been a decision by the board. There is an appeal mechanism, so I am restricted in what I can say about the particular case with which the member is concerned. I understand it’s a tragic and serious case. But as I’ve indicated, there is an appeal mechanism.

Mr Duncan: The Attorney General is aware that the appeal is an appeal to the courts, which would cost Mr Monforton a considerable sum of money. The Attorney General and the government can deal with this situation. I give an undertaking to the Attorney General that the official opposition would support an amendment to the statute to allow for the benefits of innocent victims, like Mr Monforton, to continue.

The appeal to the Divisional Court will cost Mr Monforton and his family a considerable sum of money. You gave your undertaking before the decision of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to review it at that time. I’ll ask you again today—and state up front that the official opposition will support an amendment to the act to provide for Mr Monforton—will you, as the Attorney General, bring forward the appropriate legislation to prevent Mr Monforton from being victimized yet again?

1430

Hon Mr Flaherty: I thank the member for the supplementary. The last time the limit was looked at was November 1986. As you know, we have a deep-seated concern for victims of crime on this side of the House.

I can confirm to the member that I have asked the chair of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to review the lifetime maximum limit and to provide me with some background material and data, which I would be pleased to share with the member for Windsor-St Clair. I will review the issue of whether the lifetime maximum ought to be increased and respond to the member opposite once I’ve completed that review, so that we can act, as I’m sure the opposite wants to, in the best interests of victims of crimes.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. I understand that today the larger municipal utilities in Ontario filed their electricity rate applications with the Ontario Energy Board. My constituents are concerned that this will mean rate increases to electricity rates. Minister, is this true?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the question of my colleague. We are reviewing applications that have been put before the Ontario Energy Board. It does appear that many municipalities are going for a cash grab on the backs of electricity customers.

The white paper that preceded the Ontario Energy Competition Act made it very clear that municipalities can earn a commercial rate of return on their equity or on their wires business. But we told them that they had to earn that rate of return, which means: find savings.

This province still has over 250 local municipal utilities. That's far too many. We need more amalgamations, and we need those municipal politicians who now run those utilities to start working with the Ontario government to bring electricity rates down. There is nothing in the act that requires rates to go up and, frankly, we're disappointed in the behaviour of many of our municipalities.

Mr Tascona: It is very reassuring for my constituents to know that this government is here to protect consumers. Minister, you have outlined what municipal utilities should do to keep rates down for their customers, but what is our own company, the Ontario Hydro Services Co, doing to ensure rates are low?

Hon Mr Wilson: The Ontario Hydro Services Co is, under the act, treated like a large municipal utility, and it is setting out an excellent example for other municipal utilities to follow. It is earning its new rate of return by cutting costs. It is squeezing efficiencies and not squeezing customers, like we're seeing in some municipalities.

For almost four decades, longer than I've been alive, the Ontario Municipal Association and municipal politicians asked to be in commercial businesses. They wanted the opportunity to run a business. This is the first time in the history of this province that we've allowed municipalities to get into a commercial venture, and rate increases are threatened by those very politicians.

If I have to, I will ask this Legislature to act against those municipalities that are not acting in the best interests of their customers. We will not tolerate municipalities robbing from Peter to pay Paul; robbing from their electricity accounts to pad their municipal budgets in a municipal election year. That will not be tolerated by this side of the House.

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges

Universities. On Friday you announced the introduction of private, for-profit universities in Ontario. You did this without bringing the policy to the Legislature to be debated. This was not part of the Blueprint and the government cannot claim that this was a promise made during the election. You did this at the end of April, once most students had already finished their studies for the year. You claimed at the press conference that students were asking for private universities. The students deny this.

Minister, I would like you to answer a question here that you didn't answer at the press conference—here in the Legislature where you are accountable to the students of this province. Private vocational colleges have a loan default rate of over 30%, the highest of any post-secondary institution. In the last month, three private vocational colleges have declared bankruptcy, leaving their students with huge OSAP loans, no education, no diploma and no place to turn. How can you guarantee that these private, for-profit universities you are inviting into Ontario won't follow the same miserable track record and leave our students high and dry with OSAP loans and no education?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): In response to the question, the announcement we made last Friday was about providing students, no matter what age they are or where they live, with a wider range of choices to complete degrees. As part of that announcement, we made three promises: (1) They would have choices; (2) they would have a quality education, a quality degree; and (3) they would be protected from the very scenario the member has presented to us today.

The quality assessment board will be established, and we're looking for input for the board, for its mandate, the best advice we can get on how we make sure that these degrees are of high quality and that this is not an expense to the public—otherwise, no public dollars—so that when and if, down the road, we do look at OSAP—when and if—we will not be looking at the scenario the member put forward to us today.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Minister, at the press conference you said that OSAP loans would be allowed for these institutions. Unless you change the bankruptcy laws, how are you going to prevent a private corporation, a for-profit university, from going bankrupt? How will you prevent that? Let me make it clear: Last week, Clarke career college went belly up. It closed three locations without any warning. Three hundred students went to school Tuesday morning and the doors were locked. One student in my riding is a single mother with a \$4,000 OSAP loan. She's stuck, two months before graduation, without a diploma and with a \$4,000 loan.

The people in your office have tried to help her. That's not the point. Their hands are tied, Minister. What will you do specifically? What will this quality board be able to do, specifically, to avoid this, not only for the career colleges but also for the for-profit universities that you're bringing into this province?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: The scenario as described by my colleague opposite is very serious. When we establish our private vocational schools right now, we demand that those students are protected. This is a competitive environment and we do not want those students not to be able to complete their education as described. We have had a few of these scenarios and the students have had arrangements to complete their degrees and they've also had arrangements so that their money is refunded.

This is not entirely the best we should be able to do, but we have another opportunity, and that is why we are going out for public consultations on the quality assessment board. These issues can come forward, and if there are any better ideas around the question the member asked me, we will be listening. Better ideas and a competitive environment of course will make more accessibility for more students, under more circumstances, no matter where they live.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member. If we can stop the clock for a quick minute, in the members' east gallery we have Mr Ross Stevenson, who was the member for Durham York in the 32nd and 33rd Parliament, and all the members would like to welcome him. We can start the clock.

RURAL JOBS STRATEGY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Rural economic development continues to be a concern to my constituents. Tools like the rural job strategy fund and the rural youth job strategy fund have been very important in my community as well as in other rural communities around Ontario. In fact, in the small hamlet of Craighurst, a company named Chelsea Chocolates is just being developed by two young women who are using Ontario icewines to fill these chocolates and they're shipping them right across the province. They've used the rural job strategy to do so. Minister, could you give this House an update on the other benefits of the rural job strategy fund?

1440

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'd like to thank the member for Simcoe North for the question. The rural job strategy fund, which members of the Legislature will remember was announced in the 1997 budget, is a three-year, \$30-million fund to create jobs in rural Ontario. I'm pleased to announce that as of March 31 of this year, all the funds have been committed and are working to promote job creation and investment in rural Ontario.

In 1997, an initial \$3 million was invested to create 4,300 summer jobs for rural youth. During the past two years, we have approved 192 projects around rural Ontario, which represents an investment of \$163 million by private-public partnerships. The province has committed over \$27 million, which has leveraged six privately secured dollars for every public dollar. I expect this investment to generate over 10,000 jobs in rural

Ontario in agriculture and food, tourism, manufacturing, mining and the forestry sectors.

Mr Dunlop: Minister, there is no doubt that the rural job strategy fund has been successful in helping rural Ontario. The rural youth job strategy has been another very important tool in helping give job opportunities in rural Ontario to our young people. Could you give us an update on this program as well?

Hon Mr Hardeman: The rural youth job strategy, which was announced by our government in 1998, is a four-year, \$35-million fund that has been a real success in rural Ontario. In partnership with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, we have provide transportation assistance each year for close to 5,000 school-to-work transition students and created jobs for over 363 rural youth in community access partnership program sites in rural Ontario.

The rural youth job strategy has also provided funding towards the Ontario WorkinfoNet project, which provides free-of-charge Web sites to help Ontario youth service providers, educators and government agencies in job searching, career planning, training and starting a small business.

As of March 31, we have also approved 60 projects, representing an investment of \$36.1 million by private-public partnerships in job creation, training opportunities and work placements for rural youth. Over 2,212 rural youth have been placed in internship positions and another 2,000 are taking specialized training programs to raise their skills. In total, the province has invested \$17.5 million in creating jobs and work—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time's up.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and it's with respect to the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act and provisions that would amend section 68(1) of the Municipal Elections Act. Minister, this is a section that I've spoke to you about directly and I appreciate your attention to this issue and looking at it.

For the edification of members of the House, the amendment that is being proposed under the Municipal Elections Act would stop candidates in municipal elections from fundraising about seven months after the campaign period is over, even if they have a debt. Currently that period for filing is December 1, and if there's a debt they can continue to fundraise receiptable, rebatable funds until that debt's paid off. You will all know that in our riding associations, where we have political parties backing us, many times there are debts that go on much longer than six months. For an individual municipal politician with no party backing, to be faced with a six-month period after which any fundraising is not receiptable or rebatable becomes a barrier to participation in the democratic forum.

I've raised this issue in debate and with the minister and I know it's being looked at, but given the fact that a

time allocation motion was passed yesterday which now only allows one day to deal with clause-by-clause, I'd like to bring this issue to the attention of the House and ask the minister if he would respond to the concern I have raised with respect to this section.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): In response to the honourable member's question, she has raised it; I have looked into it. I agree with her. I think there is an opportunity to make an amendment in the style that she has requested and I'm gratified that this the worst she can say about the act.

Ms Lankin: Don't provoke me. There's much I could say about the act. But I do have a sense that there is an issue here than can be resolved and I appreciate pursuing it.

One of the things you said to me in the letter is that you're proposing to establish a clear deadline for all campaigns, just as you and I face dates for our campaigns. I would argue that the current December 1 or the proposed December 31 is in fact a deadline for the campaign, unless there is a debt. Just like you and I, once we file our papers, if there is a debt, we continue to have the ability to raise receiptable funds to pay that off. I would hope that as you look at the amendment you would recognize that any deadline on a candidate with a debt becomes a financial barrier, both perceived and real, to participating. Given that your bill purports to be about increasing democracy at the municipal level, I would hope you would recognize that this amendment, as it applies to candidates with debts, is entirely inappropriate and that there shouldn't be any deadline. I appreciate, so far, your indication. Can I ask you, will your amendment eliminate any deadline with respect to an individual who is facing a debt?

Hon Mr Clement: We're trying to be reasonable here on both sides of the House. I certainly encourage her, if she has any particular options, to bring them forward. I would say this: I do not agree that there should be no deadline, because we have had cases in municipal elections where municipal politicians have used the absence of a deadline to be permanently campaigning and permanently raising money. So I don't think the answer is no deadline; the answer is, a reasonable deadline, and I'm willing to take her suggestions in that regard.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Today the government is going to release a budget and tell us how great things are going in Ontario. I can tell you that everything is not that wonderful. Municipalities cannot afford to upgrade the downloads on the municipalities, namely, the bridges. Then there is the condition of Highway 138, a lonely provincial highway connecting the International Bridge and the 401 to the nation's capital.

When my leader, Dalton McGuinty, was in my riding a few short days ago, he told my constituents they would continue to pressure the Legislature to get that highway

upgraded. After my statement a few days ago, you came over and told me you would be starting an upgrade on that highway shortly. Minister, can you tell my constituents what you told me a few short days ago in the Ontario Legislature about the upgrade to Highway 138?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): Absolutely. I think the member started the question absolutely correctly by talking about the absolutely magnificent budget we're going to bring in, which is confirming all our promises we made in both the 1995 election and the 1999 election. You're quite right, and our government has proceeded year over year to have record budgets for road construction in this province.

With respect to Highway 138 in your riding, you're quite correct. In 1998 we invested some \$2.8 million to reconstruct Highway 138 north of Monkland—that was the 17-kilometre section to Highway 417. The MTO is currently preparing a contract for the southern 19-kilometre section, from Monkland south to Cornwall Centre Road. We are very pleased to be delivering on our promises to improving the roads of this province.

Mr Cleary: Thank you, Minister. Can you tell me when those contracts will be out and when you expect to complete the section of that highway? My constituents want to know. They're tired of driving over those potholes. Your government's been in power five years now and I think that's a disgrace as a provincial highway.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I want to say that yes, indeed, our government has been in power for five years and every year we have invested record amounts in the roads, improving the condition of the roads that, quite frankly, the two opposition parties left in a very sad state of affairs. We have consistently invested in upgrading strategically all across the province, in northern Ontario, in south-western Ontario, in eastern Ontario and in central Ontario. We will be moving forward with many other projects and we will announce those in due time.

1450

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question today is directed to the Minister of Correctional Services. Last week in the Northumberland News, a constituent in my riding wrote a letter to the editor claiming that this government will be hiring lone, not fully trained, low-paid private security guards to escort violent offenders in our communities. The union representatives are creating great concern in my riding that a security guard will not have full training and will not have the same rights and responsibilities as real correctional officers. I've been wondering if this is union propaganda or is there justification for the rhetoric? I'm told that this is scheduled to start June 1, 2000. Minister, who and what type of officer will escort these violent offenders into communities that have hospitals like Cobourg, Campbellford and Quinte West?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I should say to the honourable member that the

only one who's been talking about the likes of what he read from the article, in this House or anywhere, is the member for Brant in the Liberal benches opposite. I'm assuming that's his recommendation to me, but I should say to him and to you and the people in the House that indeed it's union rhetoric. We have absolutely no interest in proceeding along the road that was referred to in this letter that was written, I assume, by the union office and president.

Mr Galt: I'm not surprised to find it is in fact union rhetoric, but it certainly has created an awful lot of concern in my community, particularly in Cobourg where the Brookside facility is located. I thank you, Minister, for that response.

Correctional officers and residents in my riding are very concerned also about privatization. They have heard some horror stories, and they're trying to spread those horror stories and extend them. They're concerned that privatization will mean less accountability and will jeopardize public safety. Minister, how will privately operated correctional services mean more accountability and adherence to standards of safety and security?

Hon Mr Sampson: Again, more union rhetoric, more Liberal rhetoric. Clearly, what we are trying to do in this province is establish benchmarks that deal with levels of safety, effectiveness and efficiency in this province. I gather that only the union executive and the Liberals would be happy with having 7,800 staff in this province and a budget of almost a half a billion dollars producing results such as 70% to 80% of offenders who go through the system reoffending. I gather that is the measure of success of a Liberal and that is the measure of success of a union leader; that is not the measure of success of this minister or this government.

I believe, and this government believes, we need to have a correctional system that's safe, effective, efficient, is producing results and is publicly accountable for those results on a regular basis. Liberals want golf courses attached to jails; we want a correctional system to deliver results. That's the difference between you and I, sir.

MAMMOGRAPHY

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is for the Minister of Health and is about accreditation of mammography machines used for the screening and early diagnosis of breast cancer.

Accreditation by the Canadian Association of Radiologists requires that a physicist audit the machines yearly. It also means that radiologists and technologists require special training because of the nature of the X-ray and because the mammography X-ray is one of the most difficult to interpret. I'll give an example of Ajax and Pickering hospital whose catchment area serves about 300,000 people. It has a mammography machine that's 12 years old. Dr Jaffe, a physicist, would not accredit the machine because it was too old. Women are still screened on this machine because there is no regulation. Minister, why are 60% of the mammography machines in this province not accredited?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the member knows, we have actually taken some steps to ensure that the Ontario breast screening program is expanded across Ontario, and new equipment is being made available. In fact, we have invested \$24.3 million over four years to expand that program. Since 1995, we have seen the opening of at least 49 new sites. We know that as the result of the screening that is going to continue to take place, we will see a decrease in the incidence of death among women over the age of 50.

Ms Di Cocco: First of all, the Ontario breast screening program is restricted to women over 50 only, and there is no breast screening program in Ajax-Pickering. The breast screening program doesn't mean that the machines are accredited except for when they are first installed. Minister, you wouldn't even meet with the founders of the Breast Cancer Society of Canada to gain a better understanding of the issues.

Since 1992 in the United States, accreditation has been mandated by an act of Congress. Minister, I ask again: Why do we not have accreditation for all mammography machines in this province to provide a better service?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again, we have certainly indicated our strong commitment to ensure that all women, particularly those over 50, because that's what is recommended, have access to screening. We have been making new equipment available. Every step is being taken to ensure that women are getting the proper screening that is necessary.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE APPEALS TRIBUNAL

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I have a question for the Minister of Labour, before I get around to congratulating him on his speech last night. Even I understood what he was trying to explain—an excellent speech.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal provides a very important service to workers and employers in Ontario as the final level of appeal in the workplace safety and insurance system.

In April 1999, the Ombudsman released a report of her investigation of delays in processing appeals at the tribunal. Lengthy delays in hearing appeals and rendering decisions were identified as areas needing serious improvement. That was a year ago. Can you please tell the House what measures, if any, you have taken to address this problem?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I thank the member for the question as well as for his adjudication of the debate last night.

Obviously there is a concern, which the Ombudsman brought forward and which we share, with respect to long delays in processing appeals. The number of appeals and the backlog have been steadily increasing since 1990. From 1993 to 1996, the number of appeals increased by 136%. We are the first government to take proactive steps to eliminate the backlog. We have provided addi-

tional funding. The actual expenditure for 1991 was \$10.7 million. Today the expenditure to run the appeals commission is \$24.9 million.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: More than double. Thank you, member for St Catharines, we accept those accolades.

There are nearly double the number of vice-chairs to adjudicate the backlog and additional staff hired. As I said, when the member for St Catharines is onside with respect to this initiative, extolling the virtues of the government and extolling the virtues of the backlog cleanup, then we must be on the right track, because it takes a lot to get him to present our case in a forthright and fashioned way. I thank the member for St Catharines and the member who asked the question as well.

Mr Johnson: I'm pleased to hear you have taken steps to reduce the backlog. The question is: Is the plan working, have you set a target for eliminating the backlog and will the target be met?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Obviously if you are going to clean up a backlog, then you had better set yourself a target: not necessarily a target you can live within, but make sure it is going to clean up the backlog to help those workers who have reached an impasse with respect to getting their benefits paid to them if, in fact, they are due.

Yes, we at the tribunal filed a plan, including a target date for elimination, with the ministry and the Ombudsman last June. We not only had to work in concert with the WSIB, with WSIAT and with the ministry, but because the Ombudsman thought this was such an important issue, we took the initiative to work with Ombudsman as well. Since that time, the tribunal has consistently met its quarterly targets.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Once again the member for St Catharines is extolling the virtues of the government and I appreciate that initiative.

We consistently met our quarterly targets, we're on schedule to meet our elimination goal in March 2002 and we feel assured that the backlog situation will not recur. So yes, we set targets. They're realistic targets, and we're ahead of schedule on the targets. I think we've done the proper job to try and weed out the backlog and the concerns—

1500

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Stop the clock for a quick moment for a point of privilege.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: You heard my name used in vain three times by the member. I just wish to say to you I disagree with what the minister said today.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. Start the clock.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is for the Minister of Health. Last April, Cancer Care Ontario began sending southern Ontario cancer patients to the

States and to northern Ontario for treatment. On recommendation from Cancer Care Ontario, your ministry is providing special additional funding to cover 100% of the travel, food and accommodation costs for these cancer patients to access treatment elsewhere. This results in blatant discrimination of northern cancer patients, who must regularly travel to access cancer treatment in Sudbury and Thunder Bay. The only help that northern cancer patients get is a portion of travel costs covered—nothing for accommodation, nothing for food.

In December 1999, staff from your regional health office in Sudbury told the chair of Cancer Care Ontario's northeast committee, Mr Gerry Loughheed, that a proposal would be given to him by Christmas to cover all these costs for northern patients too. Minister, four months later there is no proposal from your ministry. It's as if the commitment was never made. My question to you is simple: Are you blocking the efforts of your staff to try and get this serious situation resolved?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The member knows full well that the northern health travel grant was introduced by the Liberal government in 1985. It has not basically changed since that time. You found the formula acceptable. In fact in 1994, when you were part of the NDP government, you tightened the criteria and you required patients to access a specialist nearest to them. What we have been doing is trying to encourage the specialists to move into northern Ontario, and I'm very pleased to say that we have been able to recruit 115 specialists into the north and we will continue to work hard in order to do so.

Ms Martel: Minister, your government has set up a special program with special funding to cover 100% of the costs of southern cancer patients to get cancer treatment elsewhere and you are not applying those same provisions to northern cancer patients. Imagine how emotionally stressful it must be to have cancer treatment, and then imagine the additional burden of wondering whether or not you have the finances to leave your own community to go to Sudbury or Thunder Bay and stay to get treatment. Imagine again how you will feel when the patient beside you from southern Ontario tells you that 100% of their travel, food and accommodation costs for cancer treatment is being covered by the Harris government, when you're wondering if you're going to get enough money back from the travel grant to cover even your gas costs from Timmins to Sudbury and back to Timmins, or from Fort Frances to Thunder Bay and back to Fort Frances.

Minister, even you must understand how wrong this is. Why don't you do the right thing now and say that you will cover the costs so that northern cancer patients can access cancer services in Sudbury and Thunder Bay too without a financial burden?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Stop the clock for a quick moment. The member has asked the question. The Minister of Health is waiting patiently to answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member opposite quotes Mr Lougheed. I would just show you that I have a letter here from Mr Lougheed in 1999, where he writes to the Premier and says, "Your government is doing an excellent job on regional cancer delivery." I also have here information indicating that our government has continued to provide more capital funding for the northern regional cancer centre. On May 5, 1999, we provided approval of—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Will the minister take her seat. Stop the clock for a minute.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The member has asked a question. I need to be able to hear the answer. We can't be shouting across. Sorry to interrupt. Minister of Health?

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Mr Speaker—

The Speaker: Will the minister take her seat. This is the last warning. Stop the clock for a quick moment. We've got a couple of minutes left. It's the last warning for the member for Nickel Belt. It's the second time I've been up. I can't keep getting up. I'm afraid this is her last warning. We're almost out of question period. The minister is waiting patiently to try to give an answer. The Minister of Health, if she would, please. Sorry to interrupt.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Our government has responded to the needs of the north with respect to cancer. As you know, we are going to be developing a new cancer centre in Sault Ste Marie. We have indicated increased funding support for the Thunder Bay hospital, and that also includes funding for the cancer centre. We have given additional money for the centre in Sudbury, and we have—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

LOW WATER LEVELS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): To the Minister of Natural Resources, several weeks ago I brought to your attention the problem with low water levels in the province and the crisis that has created for property owners and marina operators to have access to the lakes surrounding my riding. Since that time, the process for dredging permits has been improved from six weeks to one week. But at that time, I asked if you would consider giving special assistance to residents and marina owners in my riding by sharing the cost of necessary dredging, and you said that you would be more than happy to provide expertise to the residents in that area.

Minister, I want to ask you straight up today: What they need to get through this crisis is financial assistance for dredging to have access to the waterways in my riding. Will you provide financial assistance to the residents of the riding of Essex?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank the member opposite for the question and for again bringing to the floor of this Legislature a very important issue for the people of

Ontario. As I assured the member opposite on the prior occasion on which we had this question, this government has been working for almost a year now. Understanding that we do have drought conditions in the province, that we do have a reduction in precipitation and an increase in the temperature, we have been working on both a response for those drought conditions this year and for an even more detailed response in the years to come. Among that is compiling the science around the causes of drought, around the amount of groundwater and lake water we have in the province, doing proper inventories between all of the different ministries that are involved, and in doing a public consultation, which we will undertake, to find out how we should respond to drought in the future. We are undergoing that right now.

Mr Crozier: Minister, you haven't answered the question. The problem is that as of the first of May, normally boats are going in the water, normally residents and marina owners are having access to the water. They can't do that this year. You should have known that this problem existed. It has existed for several years, except that it's gotten extremely bad this particular year.

I ask again. Studies, consultation, everything aside, there are marinas closing as of today because they don't have access to the lakes. There are tourism dollars being lost. There are businesses that are going to suffer irreparable damage. When we're talking about a great budget that's going to be presented today, I would hope that you can give some assurance that in that budget there will be some financial assistance for the people of my riding and, for that matter, others in the province. Will you give us that commitment today?

1510

Hon Mr Snobelen: Again to the member opposite, I want to emphasize that the ministries involved and responsible for water in this province, of which there are many, have been working very hard together for the last almost a year to get a coordinated response to help municipalities and conservation authorities, which really have the action to take when there are drought conditions. As the member pointed out, we have decreased the amount of time necessary to get a permit to do dredging and we are responding to help members in his community and communities across the province and will continue to do just that.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd just like to welcome my daughter Amy Jackson, who's job-shadowing her father on this historic day when we balance the budget for Ontario's younger generation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Welcome, Amy.

PETITIONS

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned residents of Canada, draw attention of the House to the following:

"That approximately eight new cases of childhood cancers are identified each year in the Windsor-Essex region;

"That the impact of having a child diagnosed with cancer is a physical, emotional and often financially devastating to the families of these young people;

"That the Windsor-Essex region lacks the ability to treat children diagnosed with cancer, therefore forcing families to travel to London for all treatments related to their diagnosis;

"That the Ontario Ministry of Health for the last two years has denied the necessary funding to treat childhood cancers in the Windsor-Essex region.

"Therefore your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide the necessary funding through the Ministry of Health to establish and staff a satellite medical treatment centre in Windsor to treat local children diagnosed with cancer."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition signed by literally hundreds of people from the constituency of Algoma-Manitoulin.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I'm pleased to sign these petitions.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas essential public services have been deprived of government funding because the Conservative government of Mike Harris has diverted these funds to self-serving propaganda in the form of pamphlets delivered to homes, newspaper advertisements and radio and TV commercials;

"Whereas the Harris government advertising blitz is a blatant abuse of public office and a shameful waste of taxpayers' dollars;

"Whereas the Harris Conservatives ran on a platform of eliminating what it referred to as 'government waste and unnecessary expenditures,' while it squanders over \$100 million on clearly partisan advertising;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative government and Mike Harris to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising."

I affix my signature as I am in full agreement with this petition.

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): "To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians with a developmental disability are in growing danger of inadequate support because compensation to staff of not-for-profit agencies is, based on a recent survey, on average, 20% to 25% less than compensation for others doing the same work in provincial institutions or similar work in other settings; and

"Whereas there are hundreds of senior parents in Ontario who saved the Ontario government millions of dollars by keeping their child with a developmental disability at home, and who are still caring for their adult child; and

"Whereas there is no place for most of these adults with a developmental disability to go when the parents are no longer able to provide care; and

"Whereas these parents live with constant anxiety and despair; and

"Whereas these adult children will end up in Ontario nursing homes and hospitals if there is no appropriate place to provide care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To significantly increase compensation for workers in not-for-profit agencies so that it is comparable to the compensation of government-funded workers in identical or similar occupations; and

"To provide the resources necessary to give appropriate support to Ontarians with a developmental disability who at present have no place to go when their parents are no longer able to care for them."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature hereto.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Petitions? Seeing none, orders of the day.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr Speaker, I ask for consent for this House to adjourn until 4 pm, at which time the Minister of Finance would like to present his budget.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Just so the members know, there will be a five-minute bell at five to 4. This House stands recessed until 4 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1516 to 1600.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2000 ONTARIO BUDGET

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by Mr Harris, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would ask the indulgence of the House while the pages deliver the budget to each member. Do all the members have their copies? Minister of Finance.

Hon Mr Eves: The budget of Ontario is balanced.

Balanced budgets mean brighter futures for all Ontarians.

"Never in the history of this province has a government at the end of five years in office been able to say that everything was paid for and that the net debt had been reduced."

Those were the words of Ontario Premier Leslie Frost in his balanced budget address of 1948. As we approach our government's fifth anniversary I am proud to stand before this Legislature today and say that, once again, the budget is balanced and the net debt has been reduced.

Ontarians believed that we could balance the budget in June 1995 when we were faced with a projected deficit of \$11.3 billion.

Ontarians believed we could balance the budget when government was spending \$1 million more every hour than it was taking in in revenue.

Ontarians believed we could balance the budget even though they had lived through a 10-year cycle of tax, spend and borrow that choked Ontario's growth, killed jobs and eroded our economic health.

This is an important budget, but not just for the government of Ontario—for all Ontarians. While it demonstrates the successes we have achieved together, it does much more than that. It establishes the framework for brighter futures—an Ontario with new opportunities and new challenges.

I would like to thank my good friend and Premier, Mike Harris, for the vision and leadership he has shown in this regard. His commitment to renewing prosperity in

Ontario has been an inspiration to me, as it has been to many Ontarians.

I would also like to thank the members of the Legislature and my cabinet colleagues whose advice has been tremendously helpful.

A great deal of work goes into the budget every year. Without the assistance and support of my deputy minister, Bryne Purchase; my chief of staff, Jeff Bangs; and everyone at the Ministry of Finance, this would not be possible. I appreciate the tireless efforts of the entire team over the past several months.

As I was preparing for this budget, thoughts of my daughter Natalie led me to reflect on why I entered public life.

I believe we are all here, regardless of political affiliation, to try to provide a brighter future for the young people of our province.

The Natalies of today will be the leaders of tomorrow.

We are here to make it a better tomorrow for all Ontarians.

And I would like to thank the people of Ontario for the input they continually provide, the suggestions they gave me during prebudget consultations and for the faith that they have put in us to deliver on our promises to them.

That faith has paid off in a big way.

When I stood before this House one year ago, I reported that, on average, private sector forecasters predicted the Ontario economy would grow by 3.8% in 1999. We were excited about that prospect and we knew that our 99 tax cuts would play a big part in fostering that economic growth.

What we didn't know at that time was just how much growth.

The people of Ontario have demonstrated how much.

They were the ones who created the 198,000 jobs across the province last year alone. In fact, we have just experienced the best two consecutive years of job creation in Ontario's history.

They were the ones who spent more of their money on homes, on cars, furniture, computers, clothing, appliances and movies, a wide range of products and services that make an economy strong.

The end result is that in 1999, the Ontario economy grew not by 3.8%, as private sector experts had predicted, but by a full 50% more than that.

Ontario's real economic growth in 1999 was 5.7%. The Ontario economy grew faster than the economy of the United States of America.

The Ontario economy grew faster than the rest of Canada.

The Ontario economy grew faster than all of the industrialized countries in the G7.

That growth was not just a figure in an economic plan; it was felt in every region on Ontario.

It was felt by auto workers in Windsor, by high-tech workers in Ottawa, by construction workers in Mississauga, by pulp and paper workers in Fort Frances.

In the words of Leslie Frost, "Let us think—not merely in terms of money value—not in columns of

figures and decimals and statistics—but in terms of human values, of people, of development....”

Those are the benchmarks by which our government measures Ontario’s progress today.

More people working, more people spending and stronger-than-expected economic growth resulted in provincial revenues surpassing projections by an amazing \$5.3 billion.

When we determined the size of our projected year-end surplus for the 1999 fiscal year, we made some decisions that would help us accelerate our plan for the people of Ontario.

We invested in hospital construction and modernization.

We invested to secure post-secondary student spaces by expanding and renewing our colleges and universities.

And we wanted to give Ontario taxpayers some of their own money back.

And even after doing all of these things, we actually had a budgetary surplus of \$654 million last year.

What this all means is that the budget was balanced in the fiscal year 1999-2000, one full year ahead of schedule—and it’s balanced again this year.

Two balanced budgets in a row. Balanced budgets—bright futures.

1610

The last time the Ontario budget was balanced in two consecutive fiscal years was in 1942-43 and 1943-44. It was World War II. Mackenzie King was the Prime Minister of Canada, receiving advice from ghosts and his dog.

Four out of five people in Ontario had not even been born yet. I had not; however, Norm Sterling had been. He was uncontrollable then at the age of one and he’s uncontrollable today. Casablanca won the academy award for best film. While I can say that the Premier of the province is no Humphrey Bogart, the people of Ontario did ask him to play it again in 1999.

While I am honoured to be the first Minister of Finance in more than half a century to announce two balanced budgets in a row, I am equally proud to be establishing the standard on which all future Ontario budgets will be based.

The Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget bill we passed last fall will ensure that from today forward consecutive balanced budgets will be the rule, not the exception.

And that is as it should be, because as we have always said, governments have no money of their own. The money we spend here belongs to the men and women who work hard to raise their families and pay their taxes. Our government respects that.

We will not lose sight of that as we turn our energies to tackling the burden of debt and creating more certainty for future generations of Ontarians.

Mr Speaker, I am proud to tell you that we are beginning to dig Ontario out from the mountain of debt that has accumulated.

The \$654 million surplus generated by strong economic growth last year has already been applied to reduce the debt.

As a result of overachieving our budget target in 1999-2000, net debt was actually \$2.7 billion lower than had been projected in last year’s budget.

I am very pleased to announce that beginning with this fiscal year, I have doubled our reserve by \$500 million to a total of \$1 billion every year.

Our goal is to more than double our promised \$2 billion debt reduction to at least \$5 billion during this mandate.

While we have worked to make Ontario deficit-free and to tackle the debt, we have continually increased our investments in those things that Ontarians told us were their priorities.

There is no doubt that health care is a top priority for Ontarians and for our government.

In the past year alone, we have invested \$1.4 billion more in health care. Since coming to office, we have increased health care operating spending by \$4.4 billion a year.

During that time, the federal government reduced their support to the program that funds health care and supports health care by \$1.7 billion. Not only have we made up for the federal annual reduction of \$1.7 billion; we have also increased our own spending by \$4.4 billion for a total of 6.1 billion new provincial dollars into our health care system.

In the future we hope the federal government will do the right thing, that they will become true partners in the health care system for the benefit of all Ontarians and all Canadians, that they will not only restore their cuts, but that they will become full partners in a new innovative restructured health care system.

In 1995 we promised to invest no less than \$17.4 billion in health care on an annualized basis during our mandate. In 1995-96 that number was increased to \$17.6 billion, and so on until the \$20.6 billion we invested in health care last fiscal year.

Ontario’s strong economic growth will enable us to invest \$22 billion in operating health care funding for Ontarians this year.

It was only one year ago that we promised to invest \$22.7 billion in health care by the fiscal year 2003-04, and that target will be achieved by next year, over two years ahead of schedule.

The amount of money that government spends is not the only measure of good health care. Sustaining the quality of care that Ontarians deserve requires restructuring and reforming our health care system to keep up with new technology and to meet the challenges of a growing and aging population.

That takes investment in the right areas. Our innovative partnerships with the private sector through Super-Build mean larger and better investments in Ontario’s health care priorities than any government could ever achieve on its own.

As a result of our economic growth in 1999, we have invested an additional \$1 billion in hospitals to accelerate capital restructuring. That amount was enhanced by our partners through SuperBuild, bringing to \$1.5 billion the total invested in the last fiscal year to modernize Ontario's hospitals and provide better equipment.

This is in addition to the \$340 million the government had already invested.

Primary care reform is pivotal to our vision of the future of health care—an accessible, integrated, dependable system, providing comprehensive care to patients 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Ontario is at the forefront of primary care reform. It is our goal, working co-operatively with Ontario's physicians, to have 80% of eligible family doctors practising in primary care networks over the next four years.

Since 1995, the Ministry of Health has set up primary care pilot projects in seven communities with the co-operation and assistance of the Ontario Medical Association.

Today, I am announcing that we will spend \$150 million beginning next year to provide new information systems to support the transition to primary care networks.

We will further dedicate \$100 million over the next four years to expand Ontario's primary care system.

We will enhance patient care through \$110 million for improved medical supervision in home care settings and improved psychiatric services.

We will increase annual funding by \$54 million for priority programs such as cancer care, end-stage renal disease and cardiac care.

We are establishing a \$180-million system management fund and providing \$75 million to transfer doctors in academic health science centres to alternate payment plans.

In July 1999, our government opened a telephone health advisory service for northern Ontario. This toll-free Telehealth service gives callers access to experienced triage nurses who provide health care advice, information and referral.

We are now expanding this valuable service to the GTA and eventually to every community across the province.

We are taking action to increase access to physicians' services, especially in rural communities. We will provide \$4 million for free tuition to medical students to practise in rural and northern areas following graduation. We will endeavour to work with communities to assist with physician recruitment in underserved areas.

I am also announcing today that we will implement Dr Robert McKendry's recommendations to increase the number of spaces for medical students.

As Premier Harris has always said, the reason we are undertaking our significant reform agenda is to ensure our health care system meets the needs of Ontarians today and tomorrow.

We are increasing our health care spending dramatically.

We encourage the federal government to join with us in reforming the system in Ontario and across the country and to finally become an equal partner in the future of health care.

1620

Dr Cal Stiller, chairman of the Canadian Medical Discoveries Fund, has said: "The creation of the Ontario research and development challenge fund and the Ontario innovation trust has launched a new era of exploration and excitement in both the public and private research communities here in Ontario. These investments position Ontario, for the first time, to compete strategically on a global scale. They will pay dividends for years to come."

The medical research community on Toronto's University Avenue alone is one of the largest concentrations of medical researchers in North America.

In last year's budget, I announced the creation of a \$250-million Ontario innovation trust. It provides matching funding to Ontario's colleges, universities, hospitals and research institutes for labs, high-tech equipment and other research infrastructure. In its first year the trust has approved \$161 million in matching funding for 120 projects.

Today I am announcing that we are tripling the trust with an additional endowment of \$500 million for research infrastructure, including cancer research facilities.

There are few families in Ontario today who have not felt the tragedy of a relative or friend affected by cancer. For this reason, I am also announcing that we are doubling the funding for the Ontario research and development challenge fund to \$100 million.

I have asked Dr Stiller to head up a team to review and report back to the government on the most effective way to launch a concentrated effort in the fight against cancer.

Breast and prostate cancer are two of the leading killers of women and men in Canada.

By harnessing the energy and talent of our research community we can make a meaningful impact on the lives of Ontarians for generations to come.

Strokes kill 20,000 Ontarians each year and are the leading cause of adult neurological disability. But new life-saving treatments offer opportunities to reduce death and damage from strokes. We are proposing new funding of \$30 million to link the province with the Canadian stroke strategy. Together we will develop a comprehensive plan to prevent stroke and rehabilitate its victims.

As part of our government's commitment to the best possible customer service and improved accountability in the health care system, we will spend \$10 million on a Patients' Bill of Rights.

Furthermore, hospitals will have their funding directly tied to how well they deliver on the services that matter most to Ontarians. The findings will be publicly reported through hospital report cards.

Of all the investments we make today, perhaps none is more important for the future of our province than those we make in our children.

Those are the kinds of investments that pay off many times over for all members of our society.

In each of our budgets we have taken steps to give Ontario's children a healthy start and a good education by removing barriers so that all children across this province can realize their full potential.

Yet again this year we are expanding children's health programs and illness prevention.

We are enhancing our successful pre-school speech and language program. We are introducing an infant hearing screening program and investing in treatment for an additional 5,000 young people with eating disorders.

The Early Years Study commissioned by our government in 1998 indicates clearly that the first six years of life establish the foundation for learning, behaviour and health.

We are responding to the study's recommendations by moving forward on a number of the proposals.

The \$30-million early years challenge fund will be launched this fall as promised.

It will build on the success of the five demonstration projects we launched last year, to help parents and communities develop the resources needed to increase their children's learning potential in the early years.

Many young children learning to read are benefiting from programs that provide specially trained teachers, reading clinics and reading buddy programs.

We will invest an additional \$70 million annually to enhance these programs and improve the reading skills of young students, especially in the primary grades.

As part of our commitment to quality education in the early elementary grades, we will be providing additional funding of \$101 million annually to reduce average class sizes, JK through grade 3.

My colleague the Honourable Janet Ecker, Minister of Education, will be coming forward this spring with initiatives and legislation to improve education quality for all students, including secondary students, in the province of Ontario.

I take particular pride in the fact that our government has always placed a high value on improving access to a quality education for all our children. As you know, Mr Speaker, in budgets past I have announced a wide range of measures that open doors for young people with special educational requirements, to help them reach their full potential.

We have also acted to provide parents and families with a greater voice in decisions about special education. We have established individual education plans for children and province-wide standards for the provision of special education.

But more can and will be done for these students.

My inspiration in this regard comes from the courage and determination shown by my late son Justin, who was learning-disabled. There are hundreds of thousands of Justins out there, and they deserve an equal opportunity in life.

I am announcing \$70 million annually in new special education funding. This funding will allow for early interventions and will expand programs for students with speech and language disorders and learning disabilities.

It will also be invested to increase the number of specialist teachers and professional supports.

This is in addition to the investment recently announced by the Minister of Education and will bring the total increase in special education funding to \$140 million a year, beginning the next school year.

We are also providing \$4 million in training so qualified professionals can test and identify young francophone students with learning disabilities.

I would like to thank Dr Bette Stephenson, my friend and chair of the Learning Opportunities Task Force, for bringing this need to my attention and for her advice and guidance in the area of special education.

Through the Ministry of Health, we are delivering on our promise by proposing to extend funding for the medical requirements of special-needs students to include students in all denominational schools. This will eliminate unfair barriers for special-needs children seeking a faith-based education. It is the fair and equitable thing to do.

I would like to thank Frank Dimant of B'nai Brith, Larry Tanenbaum, Isabel Bassett, Charles Harnick, David Young, Tina Molinari and the Honourable Frank Klees for their advice in this regard.

June Callwood, author and highly respected advocate for social justice, has worked with many organizations across Canada in the fight against child neglect and abuse.

She told me she believes Ontario can take a leadership position and I agree, so I am today announcing steps to continue to address important children's issues.

1630

To recognize the special circumstances faced by working single parents, I am proposing the introduction of a new benefit for single parents as a part of the Ontario child care supplement for working families.

This change would increase the maximum annual benefit by \$210 for each child under age seven in single-parent families. We expect that this new benefit will assist some 77,000 children across the province.

Ontario is prepared to invest up to \$50 million over five years as part of a \$100-million challenge to the federal government to join us in providing additional support for the children of low-income, working single parents.

We also call upon the federal government to reduce the high effect of marginal tax rates faced by low-income families.

We realize that single parents with disabled children face unique obstacles and we want to look at ways to help those families.

In the coming months, my colleagues the Honourable Helen Johns, the minister responsible for the disabled, and the Honourable John Baird, the minister responsible for social services, will be bringing forward joint recommendations on steps that can be taken to help these families build better lives.

We're also taking June Callwood's advice on establishing a \$5-million prevention and intervention program.

In schools, it will help teachers identify when children, especially in the primary years, may be at risk of neglect or physical or emotional harm.

The additional funding made available under the national child benefit will be invested in a wide range of initiatives that will help the children of Ontario.

Ontario's youth deserve equal opportunity no matter what community they live in, no matter what region.

These are the places where our children play, learn and grow up.

Where all Ontarians live and work.

As we enter a new century, our government is focused on continuing to build Ontario's communities, large and small, urban and rural.

Industries such as agriculture, tourism, mining and forestry are a vital component of Ontario's economy, especially in rural and northern regions.

Ontario's 67,000 farmers and their families make a contribution to the social and economic fabric of our province. Our government recognizes their contribution.

Thanks to the strong advocacy of my colleague the Honourable Ernie Hardeman, they are finally receiving their fair share of federal agriculture safety net funding, an additional \$30 million or more.

We will also meet our commitment to provide a 40% share, which will bring the total amount of safety net funding for farmers to about \$230 million a year.

I am pleased to announce that we propose to convert the retail sales tax rebate program for farm building materials into a point-of-sale exemption.

This was requested by the Premier's Task Force on Rural Economic Renewal.

The task force also identified a variety of barriers to economic growth facing rural Ontario. To address these unique challenges, we are establishing a \$600-million Ontario small town and rural development initiative.

This new approach to building our rural communities will include \$200 million for economic development and \$400 million for infrastructure through SuperBuild.

We are doing this so the benefits of strong economic growth are shared across rural and small-town Ontario.

We are also responding by providing \$300 million over five years as part of a renewed mandate for the northern Ontario heritage fund, to ensure that northern Ontario communities are full participants in Ontario's strong economy. This will double the annual funding to \$60 million a year.

When we came into office, we made a commitment to the mining industry that we would consider tax relief for that sector when the budget was balanced. Today I am honouring that commitment.

I am proposing to cut Ontario's mining tax rate in half, from 20% to 10%, over five years.

Although the federal government missed the opportunity to recognize this critical sector, our government is acting to provide tax relief. So today I am proposing to increase tax incentives provided for investors in flow-through shares. We challenge the federal government to do the right thing with respect to this sector as well.

We also intend to provide a 10-year mining tax exemption for new remote mines, and we will create new geoscience information that will encourage more exploration for new mines to create jobs in northern Ontario.

In addition to new infrastructure investments for rural and northern communities, I am announcing the launch of the new SuperBuild millennium partnerships initiative. It will invest \$1 billion over five years in public-private partnerships for strategic infrastructure: environmental projects and projects for economic development of urban centres across Ontario.

We are also signalling today that in response to the innovative and exciting Fung report, the Ontario government is ready, willing and able to do our part to revitalize Toronto's waterfront and to make Toronto's 2008 Olympic bid a resounding success.

Our government recognizes the important role that sports, recreation, cultural and tourist attractions play in the growth and development of our province. We will invest \$300 million over five years in the SuperBuild sports, culture and tourism partnerships initiative, in order to rebuild and enhance publicly owned local facilities, as well as expand major cultural and tourist attractions.

I am pleased to announce the first projects to be funded through this initiative. We plan to contribute \$15 million towards a new \$30-million project at the Ontario Science Centre. We will also contribute \$2 million towards redeveloping the Avon Theatre in Stratford.

And we are spending an additional \$50 million over four years to promote tourism in our province and world-class tourism opportunities that exist here at home.

Last year we made a record investment in the highways that link our communities. Today I am announcing that we will spend \$1 billion this year on Ontario's highway system—a new record of investment.

Infrastructure investment keeps Ontario moving, and moving forward.

Our communities not only need to be strong; they need to be safe.

In my pre-budget consultations I met with law enforcement officers who told me we need to do more to protect our seniors, to fight organized crime and to reduce youth crime. I would like to thank them for their advice. I would also like to respond to them by doing what they asked us to do.

We are establishing a permanent community policing partnership program with \$35 million a year in funding.

We are providing \$6 million in annual funding to establish three new specialized OPP policing teams that will be deployed province-wide.

The e-crime squad will build the capacity and expertise needed to respond to the emerging threat of computer crimes.

The seniors' assistance squad will crack down on criminal activities that target senior citizens and work with them to prevent victimization.

A special safety team will provide intensive patrols on Ontario's snow trails and waterways to ensure effective enforcement of the law.

1640

At the same time, we want to increase the fight against organized crime through the strategic deployment of the organized crime joint force operations for police and prosecutors.

We are building on our innovative approach to dealing with youth crime by expanding existing programs targeting youth crime and violence. Over the next two years, we plan to triple the number of sites for the youth justice committee pilot program from six to 18 new sites.

The Probation Officers Association of Ontario told me we needed more probation and parole officers to improve community safety. I am announcing the addition of 165 new probation and parole officers to provide more intensive and frequent monitoring of offenders and to assist in restricting the movements of offenders serving sentences in the community.

This is part of our new \$18-million strict discipline model for community corrections.

Our government continues to deliver the message that we stand on the side of victims of crime. We intend to make permanent the office for victims of crime. This office will provide advice to the government in the development of an overall framework for victims' services, and I thank Priscilla de Villiers for her advice on this matter.

In last year's budget we doubled the number of domestic violence courts. This year we'll provide additional funding to increase the number by a further 50%. To expand associated supports we are enhancing, by \$10 million in annual funding, the programs that support women and children who have experienced domestic abuse.

As opportunities open up in cities and towns across Ontario, we must provide our young people with the skills and access they need to take advantage of those opportunities. That means finding new and innovative ways to link post-secondary education and training programs with the private sector.

As St Clair College in Windsor builds a new automotive and engineering technology department, DaimlerChrysler is right there with them through a SuperBuild partnership.

Helping the college realize this important goal is more than an investment in infrastructure for DaimlerChrysler. It is an investment in their own skilled workforce for today and for tomorrow.

Similarly, at Durham College a partnership of seven private sector organizations, including GM and the Canadian Auto Workers, is creating a new manufacturing and information technology centre. This state-of-the-art facility will include new classrooms, labs and shops, and provide spaces for more than 3,000 additional students.

A new apprenticeship innovation fund will provide \$15 million over three years to modernize classroom training for existing programs and introduce opportunities in new trades.

While we are encouraging partnerships like these, we are also increasing access to education so that there will

be a space in college or university for every qualified student who wants to obtain a post-secondary education.

Last year we invested \$742 million to build and modernize universities and colleges so that they can meet future demands. Through these 35 SuperBuild capital projects, we will be creating 57,492 student spaces in post-secondary schools across Ontario.

I am pleased to announce that we have provided an additional \$286 million of new SuperBuild investment to expand and renew our colleges and universities. This funding will support an additional 24 capital projects and spaces for 15,587 more students.

This means that, among others, the University of Western Ontario and Fanshawe College will receive a new communication, information and multimedia studies centre. A new faculty of arts and sciences will be built at Trent University. Brock University will get a new academic complex.

Our total \$1-billion investment through SuperBuild, combined with our partners' contributions, will result in a total of \$1.8 billion invested for more than 73,000 new student spaces in Ontario's colleges and universities. This is the largest capital investment in our post-secondary system in more than 30 years.

We are investing in skills for jobs. We are investing in the youth of Ontario.

We are investing in new technologies, fostering research and development activities, and ensuring that businesses have workers with the skills they need to compete with the best in the world.

We are committed to giving our young people the freedom and tools they need to innovate.

Our additional endowment of \$500 million through SuperBuild to the Ontario Innovation Trust will furnish our research institutions with the labs and equipment to be at the leading edge of scientific, technical and medical research.

Today I am also announcing the establishment of a new Ontario Research Performance Fund to provide over \$30 million annually to colleges, universities and research institutes. This will cover the overhead costs associated with Ontario-funded research.

The province of Ontario is quite prepared to fund the costs associated with our own research. We fully expect that the federal government will likewise cover the indirect costs associated with their own sponsored research.

This government's investments in research and development, in partnership with the private sector and Ontario's post-secondary institutions, are paying off with a number of new companies being created through spinoffs from research.

New R&D-intensive companies are increasingly using stock options to attract and retain highly skilled workers. Our government is committed to providing a competitive tax system to help these young Ontario companies find and keep these bright, young, innovative minds.

We will be introducing legislation so that the first \$100,000 each year in taxable employment benefits arising from designated stock options and capital gains will not be taxed by the province of Ontario.

I encourage the federal government to join with us and do the right thing for these innovative companies and their employees.

We are proposing to exclude from the employer health tax base the stock option benefits of employees of R&D-intensive companies.

Ontario's television and film industries make up a leading-edge sector that has grown rapidly in the last five years and now directly employs over 10,000 people in the province of Ontario. This sector spends over \$1 billion in production annually in Ontario.

The changes we propose will foster the growth of those industries by increasing the effectiveness of our tax credits and establishing regional incentives.

We will invest \$30 million over five years for the creation of the new Ontario Media Development Corp—one-stop shopping, so to speak.

As we experience renewed growth and prosperity in Ontario, we must continue to look to the future. Just as more people today are getting jobs, we need to make sure that jobs are there for our children and for generations to come.

Attracting new and innovative businesses to Ontario and increasing the competitiveness of the companies that are here will create even more employment opportunities for tomorrow and increase the standard of living for all Ontarians. Corporate tax cuts will make that happen.

1650

The preliminary working group of the business tax review panel has provided me with initial recommendations on ways to increase tax fairness and attract companies to Ontario. The panel will continue to examine more ways to further create jobs through our personal, corporate and property tax systems.

I look forward to their advice. However, we need to take action immediately.

Currently, the general corporate tax rate is 15.5% and the rate on manufacturing and processing income is 13.5%. I am proposing a comprehensive strategy to cut both the general corporate income tax rate and the manufacturing and processing rate to 8% by the year 2005.

This will be the lowest general corporate income tax rate in Canada.

When our tax cut plan is fully in place, the combined Ontario and federal corporate income tax rate would be more than 10 percentage points lower than the average rate of US Great Lakes states, our biggest competitors for businesses and jobs.

I encourage the federal government to match our reductions and make us the most competitive jurisdiction in the entire world.

I am proposing to further reduce the small business tax rate by accelerating and enhancing Ontario's small business tax cut from 8% today to 4% in 2005, also the lowest in Canada.

We are responding to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business by proposing to expand over the next five years the amount of income that is eligible for

the small business corporate tax rate to \$400,000 from its current level of \$200,000, where it has been for almost 20 years.

The income limit at which the small business rate is phased out would then become \$1 million. Updating this income threshold will help more than 7,500 of Ontario's smallest growing businesses.

To level the playing field with other self-employed individuals who can choose whether or not to operate their businesses through a corporation, our government proposes that the right to incorporate be extended to all regulated professionals.

Growing businesses, more consumer spending and more opportunity—there can be no doubt that there is a renewed spirit of optimism in our province.

The evidence is irrefutable. Tax cuts do create jobs: more than 700,000 jobs since 1995.

Our 99 tax cuts to date are fuelling robust economic growth in Ontario, allowing us to balance the books a full year early, and support unprecedented levels of investment in priority services.

I am pleased to announce an additional 67 tax cuts today. That brings to 166 the total number of tax cuts we have provided to the people of Ontario since we came to office.

Last year, we promised to reduce personal income tax by 20% over five years. With the measures I am proposing today, we are well on our way to meeting that commitment. Next year's budget will fully deliver our 20% reduction, more than two years ahead of schedule.

I am announcing that we intend to cut taxes yet again for Ontarians with lower incomes, unlike the federal government which chose not to reduce the low-income tax rate.

Ontario will cut the lowest tax rate by 5%. This is the fair thing to do and I urge the federal government to do the fair and equitable thing.

We also want to reduce the tax rate for middle-income taxpayers so they too can keep more of their hard-earned money.

We plan to restore full indexation to Ontario's personal income tax system to eliminate bracket creep, ensuring that no Ontario taxpayer will pay more tax just because their increases keep up with inflation.

In recent months the costs of driving have received a great deal of attention as fuel costs have risen.

Instead of reducing fuel taxes, a move that does not ensure consumers would realize the benefits, we have chosen to take action that will give consumers a direct benefit.

Effective midnight tonight, we plan to phase out the retail sales tax on motor vehicle insurance premiums by one point a year until it is eliminated entirely.

I am proposing a phase-out of the rate of retail sales tax applied to repairs and replacements made under warranty over the same period of time. Effective midnight tonight, that rate will be reduced from 8% to 6%.

People at all income levels are investing in the hope of realizing gains. Taxation on capital gains should be fair

and it should be reasonable. So beginning January 1, 2001, I am proposing that the amount of gain taxed be reduced from two thirds, as proposed by the federal government, to 50%, over four years.

Again, we challenge the federal government to do the right thing—to administer our reduction for Ontarians and to provide a matching reduction on their capital gains tax too.

We are also challenging the federal government to move quickly to assist Ontarians who are limited in what they can contribute to registered savings vehicles by the current federal maximum on tax-deductible contributions.

We know that to provide a secure retirement for Ontarians, the RRSP contribution limit should be increased to \$15,500. We understand that this requires federal co-operation and we will match with Ontario tax relief any federal increases in RRSP limits.

Next year we expect to fully implement a made-for-Ontario tax system. When we have our own Ontario-made income tax system, we plan to eliminate personal income surtaxes.

Personal income tax cuts have allowed us to balance the budget and begin to tackle the debt, to invest in health care, to invest in Ontario's children and their education, to invest in our communities, and to invest in research and innovation.

1700

Tax cuts have paid real dividends in terms of a strong economy and jobs in Ontario. Now I am proposing that the working men and women of this province get another tax cut by way of a dividend—a taxpayer dividend.

I am announcing that we intend to give \$1 billion of the taxpayers' money back to them. Under this plan, every Ontarian who paid personal income tax to the province last year will receive a dividend of up to \$200 apiece; that is 4.9 million Ontario taxpayers.

"Governments must at all times pioneer a pathway for the people. To a large degree the engineering plan for that pathway is the government's budget. A modern budget is not simply a bookkeeping statement or a testimony to financial management. It is a deliberate instrument of social and economic guidance. It is part of the very fabric of our society and our economy."

Those were the words Treasurer Charles MacNaughton delivered in this House in 1969 when he announced the books were balanced. His daughter Heather Howett is in the gallery with us today.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Do you want to hear what Nixon said in 1989?

Hon Mr Eves: I wouldn't go there if I were you.

Those words ring equally true today, some 31 years later.

For our part, we have pioneered that pathway by redefining how government works for the people of Ontario.

By recognizing that prosperity is achieved not just for Ontarians, but by Ontarians—the people who work hard, who create jobs, who raise their families in communities all across our province.

By letting those people keep more of their own money to spend, to save, to invest in the things they want, not the things the government wants.

By ensuring taxpayers' dollars are focused on those services that are their priorities.

By finding innovative approaches to building our hospitals, our schools, our highways and our communities.

And by lifting the burden of debt from our children's shoulders, without resting it squarely on the taxpayers' backs today.

This budget proves that the path we are following is the right one.

Balanced budgets mean brighter futures for all Ontarians.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the Minister of Finance request that we revert to introduction of bills?

Hon Mr Eves: I request that we revert to introduction of bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAXPAYER DIVIDEND ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE VERSEMENT D'UN DIVIDENDE AUX CONTRIBUABLES

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act to pay a dividend to Ontario taxpayers, cut taxes, create jobs and implement the Budget / Projet de loi 72, Loi visant à verser un dividende aux contribuables de l'Ontario, à réduire les impôts, à créer des emplois et à mettre en oeuvre le budget.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House will stand adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1707.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi privés**

Chair / Présidente: Frances Lankin
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Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Brian Coburn,
Garfield Dunlop, Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy,
Frances Lankin, Bill Murdoch
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 2 May 2000

Mardi 2 mai 2000



Speaker
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Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 2 mai 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY), 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (INDUSTRIE DE LA CONSTRUCTION)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 1, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 69, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 in relation to the construction industry / *Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui a trait à l'industrie de la construction.*

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is an important debate and I don't think we have quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Do we have a quorum?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Resuming debate.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): First of all, let me congratulate all Ontarians for the great budget that our government introduced today. I know the opposition parties are speechless. Their official line will be different, I'm sure, but they have told us—and I've met some of them—that they have no complaints. They're really happy. Because of this budget, every Ontarian benefits. I want to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, as well as all the members of this House and the Premier of Ontario. After 30 years we have a balanced budget, and I'd like to thank the Premier.

I'm pleased to stand in support of Bill 69, the Labour Relations Amendment Act (Construction Industry), 2000. This bill is the fulfilment of our government throne speech commitment to improve and modernize labour relations in the construction industry. One only has to look up at the skyline outside this building to see the impact that the construction industry has on our well-being.

Make no mistake, a healthy and stable construction industry is vital to the Ontario economy. It generates jobs and creates investment and leads to improved standards of living for our province. Think about it. In Ontario this year, we expect more than \$26 billion in new ICI—which is industrial, commercial and institutional—and residential construction alone. When we add the investment in renovation construction, the figures shoot up dramatically. It is in all our interests to ensure that the construction industry remains healthy and continues to grow and create new jobs. That is why we are proceeding with Bill 69.

Bill 69 is designed to ensure that the unionized sectors of Ontario's construction industry remain competitive, providing jobs and attracting new investments. Bill 69 also has provisions that would minimize the risk of consecutive strikes in the new home building industry, so that new home buyers do not undergo the types of severe disruptions that buyers in the Toronto area experienced in 1998. Bill 69 deserves the support of all members of the House because it has already received broad support from the majority of the key stakeholders in this industry.

There have been comments made, including comments last night, that the unions agreed "with a gun to their heads," that this bill is designed to destroy the construction unions. Let me say just one thing. This bill isn't anti-union—quite the opposite. By helping to diminish the competitive disadvantages that many unionized contractors and subcontractors are facing, this bill would actually help increase the work performed by union members. We're not striking down unions; we are actually helping them survive.

The competitive disadvantage that contractors in the ICI sector are undergoing is not news to either employers or unions. Indeed, both unions and employers came to us, because they were both victims of the same situation. They knew that they had to find a solution that both sides could live with and they asked us for help, and the minister responded.

Instead of imposing a government solution, we made it clear that we preferred an industry solution developed and accepted by all workplace parties. That kind of solution works. We saw our job as facilitators. We listened. We provided advice.

This isn't a one-sided deal. There was a lot of give and take on both sides during these meetings and consultations.

It's perfectly normal in any negotiation and discussion for parties to put their most preferred offer on the table.

That's how the system works. Naturally, employers put up one position, the unions put their own position, and it should come as no surprise to anyone in this House that either side would go public with their positions. That's basic PR, public relations. And of course it should come as no surprise to us on the government benches that the opposition on the other side of the House would put forward their supporters' side.

But actually, what really counts is that at the end of the day the majority of the participants from both unions and employers felt that they had put together proposals that were realistic and workable. These are solutions that were put together by the people who have to live with them. These are solutions put together by the industry.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Do we have a quorum?

The Acting Speaker: Do we have quorum?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Continue debate; the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

Mr Gill: Thank you, Mr Speaker. These are solutions that were put together by the people who have to live with them. These are solutions put together by the industry. These are solutions we are confident will work.

I would now like to focus on the Bill 69 reforms that will positively impact on the residential construction industry, and most particularly on future new home buyers. In fact, these new provisions are great news for any future new home buyer in the Toronto area.

These reforms will help minimize the risk of consecutive strikes in the residential construction sector similar to the ones that effectively shut down the industry a couple of years ago. Between May and September 1998, five months of consecutive strikes in the Toronto area in residential caused problems for an enormous number of people, including many in my constituency, which is one of the fastest-growing areas of Canada, with many new homes being built.

A number of collective agreements in the residential sector came up for renewal that year, and the circus began. First, one union would strike. They would eventually reach a settlement. Then the next one would establish its own demands based on the earlier settlement. When the employers refused the demands of the next union, there would be another strike. And on and on and on, for five months.

As the members are aware, construction trades are reliant on each other in order to complete a project. With these consecutive strikes, builders were unable to finish new homes on time. Buyers were unable to move into their new homes when they planned to and suffered unnecessary inconvenience, not to mention substantial expense. Schooling for their children was disrupted. In many cases, temporary housing had to be found. These people were helpless. They were the victims of a fight that they could not control or even influence.

Manufacturers, suppliers and other related industries were forced to lay off staff. Municipalities had to deal with subdivisions that were not completed on time, affecting their tax bases and causing other costs that had to be covered by other taxpayers, again as a result of a dispute over which they had no control.

The residential construction industry also suffered. Builders' schedules and money flows were affected. Since many of these builders work on a tight profit margin, there were undoubtedly many financial losses.

Union workers were also affected. It's nice to negotiate a good wage hike, but if others keep on striking, one after the other, and you can't work, your wage is effectively zero. How can you support a family if you're not working? The net result was a negative impact on Ontario's economy. It also undermined to some degree our government's efforts to create a positive business climate for investment and job creation.

In the aftermath of these consecutive strikes, both the industry and our government determined that a similar situation should not happen again. Stability and predictability are necessary if the industry is to work properly for the benefit of all.

Unions and employers came to our ministry for help. We facilitated discussions, eventually ending up with a solution that all agree should work. This isn't a solution that has been imposed. This is a solution that nearly all of the industry agrees should be tried. The solution would reform the collective bargaining system in the residential construction sector in order to minimize the risk of similar consecutive strikes.

I would like to point out that the proposed solution would only affect residential construction in the city of Toronto and the regional municipalities of Halton, Peel and York.

In these proposed reforms, agreements for all the trades in the residential sector would expire at the same time: April 30, 2001. Negotiations for all trades would then take place concurrently, with the normal collective bargaining procedures remaining in place. The parties would still be required to give notice to bargain, commence bargaining and apply for conciliation in the standard manner.

If an impasse is reached, a no-board would have to be obtained from the Minister of Labour, which then would lead to a strike or a lockout situation. However, I would like to say that the government would naturally prefer a negotiated settlement, since that is what works.

Under the proposed system, lockouts or strikes would be limited to a specified time frame of May 1 to June 15, 2001. Strikes would be prohibited after June 15 of that year.

After that date, any unresolved disputes in the residential sector would go to binding arbitration. If both parties agree, they can select an arbitrator and a form of arbitration such as mediation arbitration, conventional arbitration or final offer selection. If they can't agree on the arbitrator or on the form of arbitration, the Minister of Labour would make the decision for them.

After either a negotiated or arbitrary settlement is reached, all new agreements would hold for the set term of three years, expiring on April 30, 2004. Three years is the usual time for contracts. As well, many new home builders bid on contracts up to 18 months in advance and they need the consistency and stability of a three-year contract to be able to do a proper job.

1900

This solution was developed by the industry and has overwhelming industry support. The provisions affecting the residential construction sector contained in Bill 69 would apply only to the 2001 round of collective bargaining. However, the common expiry date for all contracts would remain a permanent feature of labour relations in the residential construction sector in the Toronto area. This solution will be evaluated by the workplace parties and the Ministry of Labour to gauge its effectiveness for use in succeeding rounds of bargaining. I can assure the members, given the industry support for these reforms, I am confident they will work for the benefit of all.

I would like to talk about the reforms affecting the industrial, commercial and institutional sector, ICI. The biggest issue facing the industry is the competitive disadvantage currently plaguing unionized contractors and subcontractors. The problem stems from the province-wide bargaining that results in province-wide agreements that are not responsive to local circumstances. It's a one-size-fits-all system that doesn't work today. Unionized employers and workers are locked into wage rates and contract provisions that have priced them out of local markets or sectors.

Here's how the system currently works. Boom times in one area, say Toronto, generate high wage increases. These increases are then passed on to other regions which may not be enjoying the effect of a boom. Over time, driven by the high wage increases fuelled by the centres enjoying a construction boom, the differential between union and non-union wages in other areas increases. The rate of pay between a union construction job and a non-union job creates an insurmountable competitive disadvantage for the unionized contractors and union workers. Bluntly put, in many areas of the province union contractors aren't getting projects and union workers are not working. A \$40-per-hour wage is nice on paper, but if you work no hours, you get zero. Meanwhile, non-union construction workers are earning a living and supporting their families while the unionized guys are sitting at home. Employers and unions came to us looking for remedies to the competitive disadvantage. We facilitated discussions and developed a model that was based on their input.

Now, some employers say we didn't go far enough. Others, like the opposition, say we went too far. Those are extremes. In developing Bill 69 with the industry, we found a realistic and flexible solution. We found a realistic and flexible solution that most could live with, and I believe it is a solution that will work.

Under the provisions of Bill 69, local employer groups can approach a union to develop local amendments to the province-wide agreements. The union is required to respond. We want and encourage them to negotiate the adjustment. By discussing the situation, the two parties should be able to arrive at a solution. However, if they can't come to agreement after 14 days of negotiation, the situation can be referred to an arbitrator by the employer group. This isn't an automatic win for the employer or a loss for the union. Under the provisions of this bill, the employer must prove their case of a competitive disadvantage, and their proof must be hard facts supported by documentation. The union must also provide documentation disproving the employer's claims. The arbitrator must first decide if there is a competitive disadvantage, based solely on the documented proof. Once the documents are submitted they cannot be amended, and no additional proof may be offered.

If the arbitrator decides that there is indeed a competitive disadvantage, he or she must choose between the final offers submitted by the employer and the union. After that, the instructions for the arbitrator are clear. If one of the final offers would remove the competitive disadvantage, it must be selected. If both final offers would remove the disadvantage, the arbitrator must select the one closest to the province-wide agreement. And if none of the final offers would remove the disadvantage, the one that is the closest to removing the disadvantage must be selected.

Given the industry realities, the whole process is quick, lasting a maximum of only 35 days. In a quick-moving industry such as construction, contractors cannot wait months for determination. The final result should be a real solution which would allow unionized employers to bid competitively for projects. It would also benefit union workers, who would be more able to support their families.

Contrary to accusations, Bill 69 is not about lowering wages across the board in the construction industry. It's about determining agreements between employers and unions, agreements that reflect the local reality and not the reality of some remote centre. Ultimately, it's about providing jobs for union employees.

Another facet of Bill 69 deals with employers' ability to hire people in whom they have confidence. I would like to point out that outside of the construction industry employers are free to hire those people in whom they have confidence. They are not compelled to rely on an outside agency such as a union for their workforce. The mobility in hiring hall provisions of Bill 69 would provide flexibility for employers bidding or working on projects outside their home areas.

I certainly urge all members that this is a good bill for the unions and the employers, and I would expect that everyone will agree with that and support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): What the member did not mention, of course, is the fact that the Minister of Labour, at the behest of the Premier, put the

gun to the head of the representatives of the working people in this province and said, "You either take this or you'll get something worse."

Of course, with so many people in this province that's what happens, like with the hospital sector. After Mike Harris said during the May 1995 campaign, "Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals," he then forced 40 to 45 hospitals to merge or to close. This was similar. You simply bullied the hospital sector into keeping their mouths shut and then of course they won't criticize the government, because there's an implied thought out there that if you criticize the government, things will be even worse.

So here they are. Once again they've put the boots to the labour unions in this province, the representatives of the working people, and some people in this House who should know better are there defending the corporate sector.

Mind you, payback time is tomorrow night. We have the huge Tory fundraiser—where, Minister of Labour?—at the convention centre. There will be 3,000 people there paying bonuses to be near the Premier, all kinds of people there. It will be a fundraising bonanza. And because now, under the rules dictated by Mike Harris, political parties can spend more money and raise more money, money will play an even bigger role in politics today. So I'm really disappointed.

The member is probably worried about the environment. The environment budget has been slashed to smithereens, devastated by yet another huge cut in the ministry budget. That shows how much priority this government places on the budget. They'll have the \$200, but we're going to have an awfully bad environment as a result of this government.

Ms Martel: In reply to the Conservative speaker, when the member uses words like "there was no coercion, no gun to the head, no intimidation" 10 or 11 times, you sure know there was some kind of intimidation, some kind of coercion and some kind of gun to the head.

I suppose we speak with different people, but the people who talked to me about this bill, particularly the workers who are going to be affected, said they were clearly told that if they didn't agree to this, the government was going to repeal section 1(4) of the Ontario Labour Relations Act, which is a protection that workers have fought long and hard over many years to retain.

For people who are out there watching tonight, why is this section so important? The section is important because it essentially forbids an employer in the construction industry who is unionized from establishing in essence a shell company that he can operate with so that he can operate in a non-unionized environment.

The Labour Relations Act says clearly that if you're talking about the same owner and the same corporation, then it is one employer and the collective agreement provisions would follow. It gets away from a situation where an employer who works with unionized workers can somehow get around the provisions of the collective agreement he has with those workers.

What we are told is, "Listen, the folks in the trades were clearly told that if you didn't buy into this, that's what you were going to get." For them, that was a greater loss of protection for their members and would result in a greater decrease in wages and salaries for the people they are trying to represent. So it is clear that the government had a gun and held it to the heads of these folks. We are not here because people on the union side are thrilled to be here. They've got no choice; it could have been worse.

1910

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I firstly want to thank the previous speaker from the Conservative caucus. A finer parliamentary assistant I do not know, a person who put a lot of time into this bill, vested interest, and a hard-working man who produced, I think, a good piece of legislation.

As to the previous two speakers, the members for Nickel Belt and St Catharines, you learn: When there's nothing they can talk about with respect to the legislation to tell you it's bad legislation, what do they talk about? They talk about conspiracy theories. It's like that movie Mel Gibson was in, *Conspiracy Theory*. If the bill's good, we'll get the conspiracy theory that somebody had a gun at somebody's head and while that gun was at their head they forced them to sign on the dotted line, and, "Now, I can't tell you who told me that, but that's what they told me."

The members for St Catharines and Nickel Belt will come in here and not argue the merits of the bill. They'll tell us there's a conspiracy out there, that the Conservatives have somehow brainwashed and coerced the unions in the province of Ontario to enter a room and sign on the dotted line while a gun is pointed at their heads. Get a grip. Get a grip. That just isn't happening today. The only time I saw the gun-at-the-head trick was during the social contract. That was the only time I saw the gun-at-the-head trick. That's when you held the gun to the public servants' heads and said, "Sign here." They said, "No, we're not going to sign," joined arms—Sid Ryan led them—and started singing that union song, and said: "No, you can't fire me. I'm part of the union. Bob Rae's a bad man." So what did you do? You pulled the trigger and you put the social contract through, cut their wages, Rae days, yadda yadda yadda, lost the election—terrible thing. Booming economy, Conservatives got elected, good things are happening, and now unions and Conservatives are together on a piece of legislation. If it got any better, we wouldn't even need you people here.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): The minister, who speaks with a great deal of passion, just said it at the end, didn't he? He wouldn't even need us people here. Talk about a conspiracy theory. What he's saying now is that he only wants the government to be here; he doesn't even want to have a sound and solid opposition.

It reminds me a little bit—do you remember when all the downloading took place with the municipalities and in the House the finance minister, the Deputy Premier, and the Premier said: "The municipalities want this deal.

They will accept a \$500-million to \$600-million download. They agree with it." Yes, they agreed with the \$500-million to \$600-million download, because what they were offered before was a \$1-billion download, and yes, half a loaf is better than none. This is exactly the same thing here. You threatened the unions by basically saying, "If you don't go along with this deal, we'll take it all away." That is not the way a government that's duly elected by the people of Ontario should function.

Traditionally, we've always had governments that, once they were in power and once they won the election, governed for all the people of Ontario. This group that's in there right now certainly isn't doing it. Who were the big winners today when the budget was announced earlier? We all know who they are: the corporations. What are the corporations getting out of it? A \$4-billion tax cut. Think about it. When there's so much agony out there with respect to the lack of hospital funding, the lack of proper public education funding, what do they do? They give a \$4-billion tax cut to the corporate sector of this province.

The Acting Speaker: Response.

Mr Gill: Thank you, members. The member for St Catharines responded on Bill 69, which is the Labour Relations Amendment Act (Construction Industry), and I don't at all recall him speaking on the bill itself. He was talking about some fundraiser coming up tomorrow. All those people who are going to be at the fundraiser, 3,000 of them, are going to be coming of their own accord. There's no gun to their heads. They're happy to pay the money. They'll be very happy to be there. I believe it's the biggest fundraiser in the history of any political party. I'll be there, because I think the people of Ontario deserve this government.

Let's get back to the bill. The members from Kingston and the Islands and Nickel Belt spoke on this bill. Thank you for your input. This bill is about fairness. It's about flexibility and removing competitive disadvantage from unionized construction companies. The result would be greater competition, greater efficiency, greater productivity and, most important, work for union workers.

Bill 69 would also greatly lessen the risk of consecutive strikes, as happened in 1998. We want to make sure that these strikes, if they're going to happen, happen once. Those people will be given the due diligence time, 35 days, and from then on they must come to an agreement so that new home buyers are not disrupted.

That's what the bill is about. It is about the union workers having the competitive advantage so they work, rather than having good wages but not being able to work. This is a great bill. We've had consultations. Everybody has agreed that it's a good bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bradley: Of course this bill is a product of coercion on the part of this government, as you know. What happened, for those who are wondering why there appeared to be compliance, was that the Minister of Labour, at the behest of the henchmen of the Premier of this province, that is, the whiz kids in the backrooms—

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): The henchpersons.

Mr Bradley: All right, the henchpersons; the member corrects me, appropriately. The henchpersons of the government put the gun to the Minister of Labour's head, who in turn put the gun to the head of the trade union representatives, the representatives of working people in this province, and said, "Either you accept this so-called compromise or we'll remove virtually all of your rights."

I shouldn't have mentioned the word "guns." I've got the member for Oshawa all excited now that I mentioned the word "guns." He'll be doing another infomercial with Charlton Heston for the National Rifle Association. By the way, I did not hear that in the budget this afternoon. I guess you were listening. I heard these so-called anti-crime initiatives. I didn't hear anything about guns out there, nothing about guns. I guess they'll have Charlton Heston in for another fundraiser. Mr Speaker, you'll remember that Charlton Heston has appeared at Conservative fundraisers in the past.

Mr Ouellette: When?

Mr Bradley: How long ago?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Three governments ago.

Mr Bradley: "Three governments ago," he says. He's due to come back.

This bill reminds me of 1998, when the Harris government in three short weeks rammed through what we called the Wal-Mart bill. That was a bill which went through the Legislature, no hearings anywhere in the province, no amendments permitted by the opposition or anybody else, and it allowed non-construction companies such as the banks—and we know these people love the banks; it's a connection there—and school boards to use non-union construction workers. It also ended the Labour Relations Board's power to automatically certify new unions.

So what's happening is that this government has a plan to dismantle democratic unions in this province by simply taking away the powers that were given to them, frankly, by and large by Bill Davis, who tried to have some balance. Bill Davis was a person of balance. This government doesn't have any balance. Everything is on the right. This is not the Progressive Conservative Party; this is the Tom Long party; this is the Reform Party with a different name, the provincial Reform Party. They're here to put the boots to the labour unions in this province. It was intimidation with a gun to the head, as I described it in my brief two-minute response. It was like the hospital boards. They were so afraid of this government that they accepted some things. When they gave a bad deal to the municipalities, the municipalities took the second offer made by the government and said, "Thank you, Mike Harris, for kicking me in the stomach; you didn't kick me in the face," as though they're supposed to thank you for doing them in, as they did in that case. The same thing as the trade unions—

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Hon Mr Stockwell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much. It gave me a chance to get a drink of water and recall my comments on the budget this afternoon—which relates to this bill, by the way, because I could see the budget coming when I saw this bill. It catered to the captains of the corporate sector of this province; the captains of industry, the mining barons, the lumber barons and people of wealth and power benefited the most by this. They threw a few chicken bones to the rest of the province.

By the way, I must say where they got the idea. They got the idea from the United States. I was reading an article in the New York Times, which you can get here in our library, called "A Resurgent Michigan Leads Newly Flush States: State Spending Machines." This is also something all you people read, the Wall Street Journal. It's the first time I've ever read it. It says here, "Governors Ridge of Pennsylvania and Ventura of Minnesota are popular in part because they've actually gotten rebate cheques into the hands of voters."

This is obviously where they get these ideas. Not only do they get Mike Murphy to run the campaign for Tom Long, but they also get this idea of the \$200 cheque. Most of the people I've talked to today have said, "You know, I'd rather have you take that \$200 and apply it to the health care system because I know that after that last contract, where once again the Conservative government wrestled the Ontario Medical Association to the ceiling"—the problem was that they did very well. I happen to be in favour of seeing members of the medical profession well compensated. It is extremely important to have them well compensated. But at the same time we had provisions of this particular contract which meant that a lot of procedures are going to be delisted, that people are going to have to pay individually for them. That's going to have a devastating effect on the average person in this province.

All the people who are going to be partying at the Albany Club and the Toronto Club tonight with your corporate friends who just got a huge payback from you people are going to be fine if they charge individually for some of these services. But I'm sure that the last Minister of Health, Mr Wilson, would never have tolerated this if he were involved in the contract. In fact, I remember what happened last time during the contract negotiations. He was endeavouring to do the job as well as he could and someone in the Premier's office snatched the rug out from underneath him.

Hon Mr Stockwell: What bill are you talking about?

Mr Bradley: I'm relating this to the construction bill, and how it is related to the budget. That's how we go.

Anyway, I know who's going to be happy. Tonight Conrad Black will be absolutely cheering over this budget. He will just love this budget. In fact, he may now take those newspapers back, not put them on the market, now that you've put so much money into his pocket. J.J. Barnicke will be happy. Who's the other guy? Not Moog—Gerhard Moog was a long time ago. Mr Monk,

Peter Monk will be delighted with this budget. So there are going to be a lot of people on the up-and-ups who will be dancing down Bay Street. Right now I can hear the music on Bay Street. They're playing "Happy Days Are Here Again" now that the Tories are putting money into the corporations' pockets, at the expense, of course, of people in the lower echelons of the economic strata, who will have to pay more in terms of their fees. I've counted 892 new fees. These are fees that are either brand new or they've been raised, user fees—892 of them. I've now come to that count, and I'm still counting. I'm going to look, as a result of this budget, and see if there are more.

It's back to the old tricks of this government: Paint the worst-case scenario for the people you're going to intimidate. In this case, that is the representatives of working people in this province. Put the worst-case scenario to them, that you're going to dismantle virtually every labour law in the province if they don't accept this so-called compromise, so they accept it. What this government really wants is for working people to have their wages go down. I heard the Treasurer talk about that this afternoon.

When they call a quorum I think it comes out of my time. That's why I know the government members want to call a quorum right now.

I can tell you that this government will now be relying more on gambling revenues. I'm going to predict that my prediction of a couple of years ago is going to come true. Let me put it this way. We're on a construction bill. There are going to be some construction projects. They're going to have to make bigger halls to hold the Tory fundraisers because the corporate sector will be knocking down the walls and the doors and trying to get through the windows to make sure they can get into the Tory fundraisers. That's one thing that is certain.

But even some of those people might be concerned about the cuts to the environment budget that we found in this particular budget. Once again environment is in the lowest echelon for this government. Huge cuts. Already, before this budget, one third of the staff were given pink slips, sent out the door—good staff, excellent staff, needed to do their jobs. Over 40% of the budget was cut from the Ministry of the Environment—even cuts to the Ministry of Labour, and I'll get to that in a moment because it does relate to this bill—but also, simply, the power that the Ministry of the Environment had has been diminished considerably. They now get elbowed out of the way at all times.

The Minister of Labour has joined this side of the House. I can certainly understand why he would do so. The reason he would do so, as he sits beside me, is because he remembers a statement he made at one time after Mike Harris got the premiership of Ontario. He said, "I guess anybody can be Premier of Ontario," after Mike Harris got the job. These days, I can tell you, things have changed. If the Premier were to stop too quickly now there would be a collision between the Minister of Labour and the Premier. I think that might well happen. I

won't tell you how that collision will happen, but it could happen.

I saw the budget this afternoon. He was wildly applauding his good friend Mike Harris. I well recall the good old days—

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It's just a minor offence under the Highway Traffic Act.

Mr Bradley: "It's just a minor offence under the Highway Traffic Act," says the member for Niagara Centre.

So the big winners, again, as they always are with this government, are big business. The member for Scarborough East has had his clash with the developers and they won. I know that must annoy him to no end, because there are people who allege—I can't say this—that he was concerned about some of the development that was going to take place in the Oak Ridges moraine and that the developers went to the higher echelons in the government and said, "We can't have anybody who is concerned about the environment in the Oak Ridges moraine blocking any of our developments," so they put the boots to him, out of the cabinet. But he can still be a spokesperson individually about this, and I listen with a good deal of interest to what is going to happen now.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Do we have to pay for these advertisements?

Mr Bradley: You don't have to pay for them at all.

One thing I do want to say so the Minister of Labour—I was trying to remember what I had to say about labour and I'll think of it in a minute.

There's one thing that I do want to say is reasonable in this budget. I'm glad that the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities listened to the pleas of the member for Niagara Centre and my pleas for funding for the academic centre at Brock University. It missed out on the first round of funding but in the second round of funding there is going to be an allocation. It just proves that once in a while, when we put the pressure on the government, when we explain how these funds really are needed, the government will acquiesce to that pressure from time to time. It wasn't only the corporate sector; there were isolated instances where others who deserved the kind of funding that is going to be forthcoming in the budget received it.

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I want to say about this legislation that what I worry about is that this government is going to take further steps to eviscerate the trade union movement in this province. A lot of the gains that have been made in terms of occupational health and safety, that have been made in terms of working conditions and wages and salaries, have been as a result of the representation of trade unions and public service unions in this province. What this government, I believe, has an agenda to do is to continue to weaken those labour laws so that the balance goes considerably over to the employer.

The best of all worlds is a world, as Bill Davis understood, where there is balance, where when you come away from the discussions about a piece of legislation,

the representatives of labour and the representatives of management feel comfortable with the final result. That may have been the public face on this piece of legislation; I suggest to you that it wasn't the private face. The corporate sector did its job, though. It made sure it said that it was unhappy with the legislation, though I'm sure, since all the concessions were made by labour, it had to be somewhat happy at least.

But I also know in terms of construction that one of the things that should be constructed is a GO Transit line to St Catharines and Niagara Falls. I advocated this just the other day in the House. I was reading a speech by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and he gave a glimmer of hope. Some people latched on to it. He said that in big projects or under special circumstances we should have an investment by the public sector in public transportation. In fact, I think the government, environmentally, has a significant role to play in public transportation, to provide an alternative for people when they don't want to use the jammed highways all the time or the very expensive Highway 407, which was given over to the corporate sector, which will be well represented tomorrow night at the Tory fundraiser at the convention centre.

I look at that and say, here was a fine opportunity in this budget to invest funds in public transit, not only for Metropolitan Toronto but for much of the province, where there's a large number of people on those clogged highways. I'd like to see the train over to Stoney Creek, up into the ridings of Waterloo, Wellington and those other places, or perhaps rapid transit to London and to Cambridge, a better service for Scarborough, for Oshawa—even better service for Oshawa. But instead this government says, "No, we've washed our hands of any public transit funding"—by the way, one of the few jurisdictions in North America that has done that. Bill Davis received an award, you'll remember, for transportation. He at the time stopped the Spadina Expressway and instead put funding into public transit. I believe at the time I applauded him for that. I can't recall exactly, but I think I probably did applaud him for that on that occasion. This government has abandoned that.

The only money you're going to have now that's coming in in greater amounts is going to be gambling revenues, which preys upon the desperate, the most vulnerable, addicted people in our society. Your ultimate goal is to have video lottery terminals, the crack cocaine of gambling, in every bar and every restaurant of every village and town and city in the province of Ontario. You've started it by bringing in the slot machines through the back door. The minister, with a lot of fanfare, under pressure by his own members, slammed the door on the 44 new Mike Harris gambling halls, the so-called charity casinos that were proposed for the province to run 24 hours a day, seven days a week, bleeding money from people in the local area. That was discontinued, but now he has opened the back door and is waving those slot machines through. Even where there's a vote against gambling, such as in Toronto, we have now 1,700 slot

machines going in at the Woodbine racetrack. I wonder about the family coalition, the family values crowd on the other side, and why they aren't speaking against this. The former police officer from London would understand the problems that come with gambling, and yet they are silent on this particular issue.

The other is the issue of compassion. I'll probably get into the issue of compassion in my budget address, but while I'm speaking of the family values crowd, I want to say this: For those who attend church on whatever day of the week they do, it is not acceptable to check your compassion on the front or back steps of the church. That must continue to come into our lives as members of the Legislature, and I really wonder.

I'm going to quote again from Bishop Asbil, the Anglican bishop. There are just a few people in the Anglican Church who support the Conservative Party, I think, but I want to quote again from a letter he wrote to Premier Harris, because I think many of the points he made are still salient today: "The one group of people who are left out are the people who are largely voiceless, and that is the people who are poor, the people who have no power."

I will cope well with this budget. I'll do well with this budget personally, because as a member of the Legislature, I make more money than the majority of people in Ontario do. I'll get the \$200 back. I saw Ken Shaw, with his usual Tory bias, on CFTO—and you can quote that to him—asking the Leader of the Opposition a silly question, "What are you going to do with your \$200?" When you look at a budget and its details, even the good and bad things in a budget, to ask a stupid question like that—I'll tell you what I'm going to do with it. I'm going to give me my \$200 to the poor people of this province.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Kormos: First of all, it's interesting that I follow Mr Bradley tonight as I did last night, when he and I were over at the CAW hall, Local 199, in St Catharines. It was part of the May Day events that had been organized by the St Catharines and District Labour Council. To culminate the day, to top it off, they invited all four MPPs from Niagara—all four. They invited the one Conservative backbencher and the Conservative junior minister and they invited the Liberal Mr Bradley and the New Democrat Kormos, and Mr Bradley and I were pleased to be there as guests to talk to people about social responsibility in government. Remember this government's Parental Responsibility Act, the one we can't debate? I suggested that this government might be wiser to reflect on some governmental responsibility and the fact that it has turned its back on so many people in this province.

I've got to tell you, coming from down in Niagara, throughout the course of last weekend a number of workers, women and men who work in the building trades, construction trades, approached me, be it at Comisso's supermarket, the hardware store, any number of places, and made reference to this Bill 69. They implored me not to support it under any circumstances. One of the things, as I understand it, is that you have put places like Niagara

under attack, because the hiring halls in Niagara will no longer be effectively utilized to hire tradespeople for construction that's taking place within Niagara. That means the so-called infrastructure and capital investments in Niagara won't be creating Niagara jobs, nor will they be creating Sudbury jobs. That's wrong, and it won't fly. I won't be supporting it.

Mr Gilchrist: It's indeed a pleasure to follow up on the comments made by the member from St Catharines, because in his comments invariably he will open up just about every topic, every subject matter that this provincial Legislature ever has to deal with, and it's always a pleasure to have the opportunity to make freewheeling comments in response.

The bottom line is that I guess the member heard a different budget speech today, and looking at the bill we're dealing with tonight, the relationship is a very clear one. Instead of a doom-and-gloom scenario—I know it is the Liberal way. If we put a gold bar on everybody's door, you would complain that it made one person's arm longer and that we should have put two gold bars so they're stretched evenly.

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The reality, to follow up on our colleague from the third party, is that we have guaranteed greater social responsibility, by guaranteeing that 700,000 more people are working. Vast numbers are in the construction industry, where here in the Toronto area alone we saw record housing starts last year. The GTA now is 25% of the construction in all of Canada. It is utterly staggering, the extent to which the construction industry has been able to move forward. This bill puts in place binding arbitration mechanisms and other tools to guarantee that there's even more labour peace, even more opportunities for both the employers and the employees to benefit from the rising tide that is the Ontario economy.

We heard in the budget today that Ontario didn't lead Canada, that it didn't lead North America, that it led the world in increase in gross domestic product. I would remind the member opposite that it has been a few years since he had ministerial responsibility and even more since he was in school, but you can't get better than number one. The reality is that we're fine-tuning, we're tinkering around the edges perhaps, but this economy is on fire, and coupled with the bill before us today, guaranteeing Ontario is still going to be the best place to work.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Let's not lose sight that we should be debating Bill 69, a bill that has very serious ramifications for construction workers in Ontario. I don't want the discussion to be side-railed by a budget presented today that has, incredibly, a number of flaws in it that we will be discussing over a period of time.

You're looking at taking away the basic rights of workers in the construction industry. You're looking at stripping collective bargaining rights. You're looking at placing workers in unsafe working conditions. That is what Bill 69 does. The simple fact is that with this legislation you, the government of Ontario, are placing con-

struction workers in seriously dangerous working conditions. That will happen over a period of time because of the naming aspect of the legislation.

The mobility aspect of this legislation is also seriously flawed, because the reality is that the employer will be able to bring 40% of the workforce with him. If the employer is from Toronto and he's getting the job in Sudbury and he can't find 40% of the workforce from Toronto, he can go to Hamilton, he can go to London, he can go to Windsor, and he can bring the 40% with him. I'm telling you that's wrong. The reality is that the mobility clause has to change for this legislation to work.

Over the course of the next two, three, four or five days this stuff is debated, I don't want to be side-railed with a discussion of the budget. It's too important to the construction workers in Ontario to have this discussion derailed because of your budget today. Talk about what's good for the construction workers in Ontario. That's what they want to hear.

Ms Martel: I know that if the member for St Catharines had had more time, he would have spoken about the criticisms he had with respect to the mobility clauses in this bill and the impact that has on unionized construction workers in local communities to actually get jobs from construction projects.

I don't think the government should underestimate the problem it has created here. Currently, under the law an employer, if he bids on a project in Sudbury and lives in Toronto and is unionized, has to use the local hiring hall. In that way, local construction workers get jobs in our communities and the money they get they then spend in our communities to help businesses there. The change you're making says, "Oh, that same employer can now bring 40% of the workplace from somewhere else." It doesn't have to be from our community. It doesn't have to be our workers, who need jobs.

Of the 60% that he has to hire locally, he then has the discretion to hire two thirds. They don't have to be on the hiring hall list. Anyone who understands construction will have to understand that the hiring hall is the way the construction industry protects some of its most senior workers.

They don't have seniority provisions, so the hiring hall is a mechanism by which they protect their workers. Now you've set up a scenario where you can have 40% of the workers coming from somewhere else. In my community, with a big hospital project underway, that may well mean that construction companies from Toronto can come and bid and a whole bunch of people from outside the community are going to get jobs instead of local people, who are doing massive fundraising for that hospital as well.

The second thing that happens is that because the employer has the ability to choose so many of the employees not from the hiring hall, he can make very conscious decisions about who he employs. Is he going to employ an older worker when he knows that Joe can't get around the work site as quickly as he used to? Is he going to employ a health and safety activist? Those are really

serious issues, and that's why we should have public hearings in Sudbury as well.

The Acting Speaker: Response? The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I think we had better check to see if there's a quorum first.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Call in the members.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

Mr Bradley: Now that I have a chance to respond with the members here, I'm pleased.

The member for Nickel Belt and the member for Sudbury are both correct. First of all, the member for Sudbury talks about the safety aspect, that this could have an adverse impact on safety on job sites across this province. I think he's right in that. In terms of the mobility clause, people who live outside of Metropolitan Toronto are going to be concerned that you will have large corporations, companies, coming into places like Stoney Creek and St Catharines and London and so on, and our local people who need those jobs aren't going to get those jobs. It's weighted again in favour of the employer, as is so much of this legislation.

What is concerning is that this is just step one in eroding the power of the trade union people in this province, the representatives of workers in this province.

Mr Gilchrist: No.

Mr Bradley: The member for Scarborough East may say "No." I ask him to watch what happens as more and more legislation is brought in during the term of this government. My prediction would be that you will continue to see an erosion of the rights of those who try to protect workers in this province. I think that would be most unfortunate, because the balance was there before.

I don't agree with everything this person does, but I do want to pay tribute to Bill Clinton for the economy that we are enjoying in Ontario right now. I've listened even to the bank people, who support you people. When they are honest about it, and they're honest when they are speaking to certain organizations and groups, they will say: "Look, here's why we have prosperity in Ontario. First of all, we have low interest rates, which are the responsibility of the federal government. Second, we have a low dollar, which makes us very competitive." By the way, the Premier wants to put that dollar way up. That will hurt auto workers in this province. "The third thing is the booming economy in the United States. That is what is fuelling Ontario's economy at this time."

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I am going to be sharing my 20 minutes with my good friend from London-Fanshawe. After my dull speech is over, you can look forward to hearing from him, because he's quite an entertaining speaker.

One of the questions in regard to this bill is, how did this government, with its tradition of consensus in legislation, arrive at a bill that is almost perfect? My good

friend the Minister of Labour is an excellent left-winger. He is one of the better hockey players in this House. He proved it just a week ago when we played the federal members' team, and I think the final score was 12-4. If I recall, the leader of the third party scored three goals for them, so they only scored one goal. Of course, the Minister of Labour again, as he has been in every game I've been involved in and managed, was a star.

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Not only is he a star at hockey, but he also has a way of reaching a consensus with people in a very difficult area. Let's face it: The construction industry has a tradition, unfortunately, of having some labour strife. I'm not even pointing out whether it's a matter of the unions or a matter of management; they do have that tradition. Somehow, we have arrived at not just a piece of legislation but in fact an agreement, basically, between all the parties. Not everyone agrees. There are exceptions, especially, it would seem, on the management side.

But one assistance, I think, to the Minister of Labour was simply that the construction industry in Ontario is booming, unlike the construction industry in, for instance, British Columbia. We've heard that Bill Clinton has done everything for us here in Ontario because of the lower dollar, low interest rates, low inflation and our exports to the US. Unfortunately, the province of BC is not doing too well. They have a person who sounds like Bob Rae—I must admit he doesn't look like Bob Rae, but he sounds like him—and he's singing the same tune and leading that province into oblivion, and that is a shame.

All of a sudden we are working; our construction industry is stretched beyond belief. Where did it all start? I remember, if I may talk about ancient history for a minute, May 1994. I was a much younger and thinner and better-looking person at that time, and I was introduced to the Common Sense Revolution, which was issued in May 1994 after consultation, not necessarily with all the experts in the world, but in fact with the common folk of our good province. This was issued well over a year before an election, which was somewhat unusual. What did it say? We said, "If we lower taxes and cut out red tape, we're going to balance the budget and, believe it or not, create 725,000 new jobs." This was going to take five years. I remember, as if it were yesterday, that there was hardly one pundit who didn't say: "This is an impossibility. This cannot happen. They are wrong, plus the people will not buy it." We started campaigning on the platform of the Common Sense Revolution—lower the taxes, create 725,000 new jobs and balance the budget after five years—and away we went.

There was a fly in the ointment. Mr Chrétien and his federal party decided to cut health care. This is really important, because part of the Common Sense Revolution said that under no circumstances were we going to cut health care. Unfortunately, Mr Chrétien came along and cut over \$5 billion from health care across this country. I can honestly say I personally was somewhat

shocked, because I think the health care system is something sacred not to only Ontarians, but also to Canadians.

What did it mean to our plan? It didn't change, except that we had to admit, because we were going to be short \$2 billion a year and we had to—\$11 billion; can you imagine? When I look back to 1994, we were looking at—

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know what the honourable member has to say is very important and there ought to be a quorum in the House. I don't believe there is.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Cambridge.

Mr Martiniuk: I can assure the viewing audience that the Minister of Labour was in the House supporting me every minute. He was standing right behind me—well behind me, but right behind me.

We were back in 1994, if I recall. Yes. Mr Chrétien, our Prime Minister, and the federal Liberal Party—not the provincial, just kissing cousins—decided that health care was not an important issue to Canadians. I think that was a terrible miscalculation. I know health care is a very important issue to me, if not the most important issue. I believe it also was, and is, an important issue to the people of my riding of Cambridge, our hospital in Cambridge, our local community care access centre, the people of Cambridge, the people of Ontario and the people of Canada. However, it meant that the five-year plan had to become a six-year plan.

I remember there was some comic relief to it because we had to change the plan and a new plan showing six rather than five years was printed. I know that plan was distributed to all the properties and residences in my riding in 1995 and to most other places in Ontario. The plan said again, "If we lower taxes, we are going to balance the budget and we're going to create 725,000 new jobs." Now it was a six-year plan and again the pundits said: "That's an impossibility. It just doesn't work." Since then I've had many debates with people of various political stripes. I enjoy my debates with some of the reporters in my locality because they go through the whole thing and say, "It's lower interest rates, it's the United States," and of course when I point to the example of BC which unfortunately, and I mean that, is not doing that well with a Bob Rae-type government, they say, "Well, that's different."

There are not too many moments that have given me more pleasure in my life than the budget today. In 1994 a lot of tough decisions had to be made.

2000

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would love to hear this member's views on Bill 69. I would love to hear him explain why he's going to support it or not support it.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Martiniuk: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I was saying, our Minister of Labour, a renowned left-winger on the legislators' hockey team, has managed to take a diverse group of people and meld them like brothers. They come before us with a consensus and an agreement, not just legislation, backing this up in the grand tradition of the Mike Harris government of reaching consensus on many occasions.

So here we are in May 2000 and we have the culmination of the Common Sense Revolution, not, by the way, after six years but in fact two years early, because as the Minister of Finance announced today, not only will we balance the budget next year, or have a surplus, but in fact in the past year we had a surplus of something over \$600 million.

That's quite an amazing feat. The last time there had been two balanced budgets in a row in the province of Ontario was ending in 1944. That would be during the war and the reigning Prime Minister at that time was our good friend Mackenzie King—

Mr Gerretsen: A great man.

Mr Martiniuk: —a prominent Liberal leader and, I must admit, a great man. He was a hero of mine in my younger days. When I reached the age of majority I matured, but he still was a great man. However, one half-century passed in this great province before we could re-enact two such consecutive budgets.

When I'm talking about the olden days I remember—Bill 69 deals with the hiring halls—that a favourite of mine and yours was On the Waterfront. There's no suggestion here that there is any corruption in our construction unions. However, I was always interested in the whole concept of the hiring hall and the problem of employees having to cater to the whims of their union leader to get a job. It always struck me as odd. However, that is the tradition in our construction industry. But of course one of the problems of having areas is, what happens to the mobility of employees, and more important, subcontractors?

We are booming in the city of Cambridge and at this moment I don't think my subcontractors are looking far afield for work because we have it here. However, there will come a time, no doubt, when there might be reason to quote on jobs which are not within our area. Up to now that has been most difficult. How does one bid on a job and cost a job when you don't know who your employees are going to be? You may never have met them before. They may or may not have the skills you're used to. My subcontractors, and these are small firms, have said it is an impossibility. What would happen if you had a small company with four or five employees and all of a sudden you had to run, let's say, a law office but you had to do it with employees you had never seen before? Even though they were skilled, it would be most difficult. That's what the small contractors were up against when they were going out to bid.

The mobility provisions of Bill 69 provide, very simply, that not only can you take your management team, but you can also take 40% of the job complement—peo-

ple you know, the leaders of your particular company. Many of these are small firms. So they take their key men, plus they have an additional advantage—

Interjection: Women?

Mr Martiniuk: And women. In addition the mobility factor would give them the privilege of naming up to 60% of the balance of the complement of their job. I think this will bring added competition into the construction field which will benefit everyone.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): Is it time for me to share your time?

Mr Martiniuk: My good friend from London-Fanshawe has reminded me that I was sharing my time with him, and for that reason I will abruptly sit down and pass the baton to him.

Mr Mazzilli: I have some difficult decisions to make now. I'm certainly pleased to speak on Bill 69, but it's difficult to speak on Bill 69 without directly speaking on the budget because it's directly proportional to the results in the budget.

What are the Liberals opposing in Bill 69? The member for Kingston and the Islands continually opposes everything on this side of the House; opposes the throne speech commitment to modernize labour relations, a commitment to a healthy and stable construction industry. That industry is a \$26-billion industry this year alone.

This legislation came about as a result of consultation with all the parties and has an industry-based solution. As the members across know, whether it's health care or education, you need community-based solutions in order to have results that work, and that's what the Minister of Labour has done here. He has found a community-based solution among labour and among the corporate sector to come up with this legislation.

This legislation is very important in the city of London because many people are employed in the construction industry. Mr Speaker, you would know the company Ellis-Don. They are located in my riding of London-Fanshawe. I believe the Liberal members know them quite well also.

This legislation and our budget are about priorities. We need to go back to priorities and how the federal Liberal Party does not represent the priorities of people in my riding. When it comes to the issue of health care, they've cut \$1.7 billion presently out of health care in Ontario. The people at London Health Sciences are demanding that this money be returned. In today's budget, we've certainly increased health care funding.

If you want to talk about priorities, let's look at some of these priorities: \$1 billion invested in hospitals to accelerate capital restructuring—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the standing rules, section 23, it says, "In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she ... directs his or her speech to matters other than: (i) the question under discussion." With all due respect, talking about health care and today's budget

is not what we're debating today, and I would ask you to go back into order.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. I'm sure the member for London-Fanshawe will draw this all together.

Interjection.

Mr Agostino: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask the member to repeat what he just said into the record.

The Acting Speaker: I did not hear the member.

The member for London-Fanshawe.

Mr Mazzilli: The point is well taken because, again, I do believe that Bill 69 is directly proportional to the results that came out in budget 2000. You can't do one without the other.

The other thing that you cannot do is create a healthy and vibrant economy without tax cuts. The member for Kingston and the Islands continually gets up and opposes tax cuts, as do most Liberals. It's those tax cuts that have created the 700,000 new jobs in this province. It's those tax cuts that have created a surplus that has allowed a responsible government to make responsible investments.

What are those investments? More tax cuts to the working people of Ontario. Low-income people go to a lower tax rate, middle-income people, even a lower tax rate, and everybody will participate. On top of that, health care; all Ontarians benefit.

Before I was interrupted, I was talking about a \$1-billion investment in hospitals to accelerate capital restructuring; \$150 million for a new information system for transition to primary care networks; \$100 million over four years to expand primary care.

Those are only a few highlights, but the people in my riding and the people of Ontario are demanding that the irresponsible federal Liberals return the money to health care that is the property of Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

2010

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker. I first of all want to compliment you on allowing the latitude of debate that's taking place here tonight. I agree with the government members that it's all interrelated. You can certainly speak about one particular bill and talk about some of the other issues as well, and the budget is an extremely important document.

What the government members totally missed, though, is that the two most important areas that the people of Ontario care about are a good, quality public health care system and a good, quality education system. These are sadly lacking from this budget.

There's one other issue that I always find very interesting when you listen to the members of the government talk. You would think that whatever good has happened in this province—and for most people in this province I will agree that times are better than they were before. But what about that one third of the people who are a lot worse off? Poverty has risen by 118% over the last two to three years. We hear day after day about the homelessness situation. What is your budget doing about that? There is not one penny in there for supportive housing.

There isn't one penny there for any social housing. Speaker, you and I can agree that both the federal government and the provincial government do have to come to the table in order to do something about the serious need for housing in the social housing area.

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: With the shouting and screaming that's going on here, obviously I've touched a nerve of some of the government members. They think this is nothing but a win-win day for them, when the people of Ontario, particularly those people who have been hurt by you over the last five years—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Martel: Let me make a couple of comments in reply. First, with respect to the comment that this is a community-based solution and there's all kinds of agreement, I just want to read into the record two concerns raised by the construction trades council: "Position of the Toronto-Central Ontario Building and Construction Trades Council on the residential sector provisions of Bill 69:

"(1) The limitation of the right to strike to a 'window' of 45 days is completely unacceptable. Under duress, the residential trades offered a complete package dealing with the bargaining process that culminated in a proposal to limit strike action to a 75-day period—May 1 to July 15. Any shorter period makes the right to strike completely ineffectual, as it will merely result in builders scheduling a reduction of housing starts for the brief few weeks in the spring of 2001."

Following that, point 2—they're related: "(2) There was general agreement of provisions that would bring bargaining parties together 120 days prior to April 30, with application for no-board and appointment of a mediator at that time. This has all been left out of the bill, virtually ensuring that the 'window' termination of bargaining by mandatory arbitration will become a reality."

Secondly, because I don't think the member for Cambridge really understands the importance of the hiring halls, the second union that contacted us said:

"As everyone involved in the construction unions is aware, the hiring hall provisions are the heart and soul of a construction industry collective agreement. It's the equivalent of seniority provisions in non-construction collective agreements. It's crucial that there be protection of workers with respect to employment. It's the hiring hall provisions that provide that protection. They ensure that employment is not based on favouritism, but rather that everyone on the list will have an equal opportunity to be employed based on the availability of work and their place on the list. At the same time, the hiring hall provisions protect employers by requiring unions to provide only qualified workers."

So the hiring hall is awfully important to workers, as demonstrated by some of the analysis we've received from unions.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Quickly, on the 75 to 45 days and the construction trades council—they endorsed the deal. They agreed to 45 days. So what do you want me to tell

you? You have a letter saying there was a concern. I went to a meeting—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I didn't heckle you.

The fact is, they endorsed the deal. So 45 days was endorsed by the construction trade council. I was at the meeting. They endorsed the deal. They're in favour. I don't know what you have on a piece of paper there. I'm telling you I met with them; they said yea.

As far as the hiring hall is concerned, the second part, the 120 days no-board, actually, negotiations can take place at any time. They're allowed to take place at any time: At 120, 150, 180, two years in advance they can begin the negotiations, apply for no-board and get mediation at any time. All it says is that the contracts expire on a common date. It doesn't say you can't negotiate; it just says April 30 is the common date for expiration of contracts. They agreed. The construction trades council agreed. They're onside.

As far as the hiring hall is concerned, what can I tell you? Rather than face sitting on a list and on where you happen to pick up on that list, we on this side of the House and the unions agreed that maybe there's another criterion that should be involved with respect to hiring. Maybe a crazy notion should cross your mind based on hiring. Maybe once in a while this concept might actually enter someone's mind.

It's called based on ability. Why wouldn't you hire the person who is the best worker, the most gifted worker, the most educated worker, the most talented worker, to work on a site so that they can have work, rather than base it on where you happen to fall on a list? That list is determined by a local executive business manager, who determines who works and who doesn't, rather than the person who actually pays the bills. That's all it's based on. The hiring hall for 24% is maintained. They must be hired at the local—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions or comments?

Mr Agostino: I want to react to the comments made by my colleagues in regard to the bill that's in front of us tonight.

I know the Minister of Labour happens to be a decent person who is trying to do the right thing, but unfortunately on this bill he was given his marching orders from the whiz kids in the Premier's office. The direction here, this anti-union, anti-labour, anti-construction-worker legislation in front of us is clearly the work of his friends in the Premier's office who have given him marching orders. They gave him the gun, loaded it for him, put his finger on the trigger and then said: "Go negotiate. Make sure the gun is fully loaded and use your rounds if you need to." That was how it was negotiated.

Clearly, if you understand the construction industry, it is not an easy industry to work in. I can tell you that a lot of my colleagues have paid a price over the years to be in the construction industry. What you're doing through this bill is legalizing discrimination based on age, legalizing discrimination based on workers who may be a little

older but have worked a long time in the industry, have paid their dues, have paid the price and should take advantage of the opportunities.

You're eliminating those people from the mix here. You are really creating a very difficult situation. There was a playing field that was level, that looked after the interests of workers and ensured that they were well protected and that there was fairness. You're not supposed to be driving down the wages in the industry. You're doing it simply to help some of your corporate friends here at the expense of average working men and women.

I would say that my colleagues, the minister and the members across, should go out and spend a day talking to construction workers. Go to construction sites, talk to the people in the field, the frontline folks, and see what they think about this and tell them how it's going to impact them. Talk to the 50-year-old construction worker who after 20 years is not going to get another damn job because of this piece of legislation right here today. You'll get the real story from them, not the garbage we're being fed here.

The Acting Speaker: The member for London Fanshawe.

Mr Mazzilli: I want to thank everybody for participating in the debate: the member for Hamilton East, the member for Sudbury, the member for Niagara Centre—

Ms Martel: Nickel Belt.

Mr Mazzilli: Nickel Belt, I apologize, and the labour minister from Etobicoke and my good friend from Cambridge.

Everybody has different viewpoints but this is a community-based solution. It was a commitment we made in our Blueprint, to modernize labour relations and that's exactly what has been done here. It's been done with the co-operation of not only the hard-working men and women in Ontario, but also with the co-operation of the union leaders and company owners.

Like I said before, Ellis-Don is located in my riding. This piece of legislation not only helps them as a company, but it helps the workers get work throughout the province and throughout Canada.

2020

I need to go back to the budget with the short time we have left. It's the first balanced budget in Ontario in 30 years. The interesting thing is that the federal Liberals, before they could balance their budget, without any tax cuts, put over \$200 billion on the national debt. They borrowed over \$200 billion and added it to the national debt, and while they did that they cut health care funding to Ontario. How does a responsible government do that?

I'm also proud to say that I've never been part of a government that has run a deficit in any—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr Dombrowsky: I will be sharing my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

I want to talk about Bill 69, the Labour Relations Amendment Act. I want to share with you the perspective

of union members from my part of eastern Ontario. First of all, I'd like to say that the Liberal Party and my leader Dalton McGuinty believe that the construction industry is vital to Ontario's economy. It has been presented that the introduction of this bill will minimize the risk of strikes in the construction industry.

The Minister of Labour in his opening remarks about Bill 69 has indicated: "The bill itself has to do with a competitiveness issue. The competitiveness issue spans the entire construction industry in Ontario today."

From that statement, I take it that obviously the purpose or the thrust of this bill has nothing to do with quality or fairness in the workplace, but actually is a dollar issue. It's how companies can make more money.

The member for Scarborough Centre spoke earlier about the construction boom in this province, that there has never been more construction in Ontario, certainly in the GTA. I believe that to be true. So my question is, what's the competitiveness issue? What is significant about that? I'm not aware that there is a crisis in building in this province, but I believe one is pending if this legislation passes.

The Minister of Labour is quite given to theatrics and I am not. He spoke earlier of a conspiracy theory, and he spoke with some passion about the presentation of the notion of a conspiracy theory and told us all to get a grip. I'm not going to present the notion that there's a conspiracy theory, but I do want the Minister of Labour to know what the construction workers in my riding are coming into my office and telling me.

These are plumbers from Sydenham, carpenters from Napanee, millwrights from Bancroft, electricians from Stirling. They're coming to my office and they're very worried. They're not happy at all. I respect that there might be representatives from their unions who are making deals that are unknown to them and possibly not even in their better interests, but these constituents are coming to me and saying, "Mrs Dombrowsky, we have a lot of problems with what the government is going to do to us." That's the presentation they're making to me. They believe they are being victimized by this bill and they feel this way for two reasons.

The first issue they bring to my attention is that of double-breasting, when a construction company can set up a separate company of non-unionized employees. They're very worried about that. That is not a level playing field. They explain to me that this will have a significant impact on the profits a construction company will have at the end of a project, but it will also have an impact on the quality of the structure at the end of the process. When construction companies are able to hire non-unionized workers, they will be able to engage persons in particular trades who might not be qualified, in fact probably are not qualified; otherwise they would be part of a union. One must ask, where are the corners being cut? If they're not qualified, if they're not trained and if there is no professional bar to meet on a regular basis, then where is the system of checks and balances?

The union people who come to me are very proud of what they do. They are perfectionists in their roles. They would say: "Yes, we make a good wage. Yes, we expect benefits. We are participants in our communities. We are the hockey coaches and the baseball coaches. We're out there working at the Lions Club, raising funds for community needs. Yes, we want a living wage, and yes, that's going to cost money." But if they don't get that living wage, the safety and integrity of the structures that are built will be compromised.

I'm reminded, as I have this opportunity to speak with you, that on my way to work in this building every day I pass a bus shelter. On the end of it there's an ad that has really impressed me. It has the statement, "We don't work in hospitals, we don't work in schools, we don't work in government offices, we build them." These are significant contributors to the society of Ontario.

We need to understand that quality is no accident. It doesn't just happen. We do have to pay for it. One way to ensure quality of structures in the province is to ensure that the people who build the buildings are qualified in their trades; that there's not just one person working on the site who has the qualifications and everybody else does what he or she might say. Every person on that site in Ontario today is qualified in the trade they are executing on that site. That will change, and that's why these workers are coming to me. They're worried about the quality of construction in this province. We certainly hear how attractive Ontario is to incoming industry, and part of that attraction is that we offer qualified and quality product in the buildings we present.

Another issue comes to me from my constituents in Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, from the plumbers, carpenters and millwrights, all these good men—all of them who have come to see me have actually been men. These hard-working community people have an issue with the mobility component of this bill, the hiring hall lists. This component within the legislation diminishes opportunities for local workers. These workers within the small towns in my part of the world, not large cities but really wonderful small towns, are integral members of our community. They're there when we need them, and their opportunities for employment are diminished with the mobility provisions within Bill 69.

So the union workers have come to me and said: "Mrs Dombrowsky, try to have the government understand this is not going to be good for the construction industry, it will not provide quality structures and it's not going to be good for small-town Ontario. Because if we lose our jobs, we will have to move away, and part of that very important fabric of our communities will leave." We saw that when this government downsized government agencies: when they closed Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of the Environment offices. Those people evaporated from rural communities, and rural communities are now bereft of the contributions those fine men and women made.

Finally, because I am sharing my time with my colleague from Kingston and the Islands, I want to stress to

the members of the government that union members in my riding are proud of what they do, and I am proud of what they do. We have quality buildings. They feel this legislation undermines their abilities and their tradition of quality work. I can't disagree with them, and I promised them that I would do my best in a rational way to have you understand that the good men and women—while there may not be many, I believe there are a few—who are members of construction unions in Ontario are very concerned, not just for themselves but for what will lie ahead in Ontario, for the quality of the buildings and for what we will attract to Ontario. I think their concerns are very legitimate, and I thank them for the privilege of representing their interests in the Legislature tonight.

2030

Mr Gerretsen: First of all, I'd like to congratulate my neighbouring colleague from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for putting a very human face on this. From all the discussion I have heard here over the last almost two hours, very little has been said about how this legislation is actually going to affect the working people, the people who aren't necessarily involved in the leadership of their unions but who simply want to work, who are members of unions and who are used to a certain procedure in which they get jobs once contracts are let out in their particular area. Their livelihoods are going to be affected. The kind of concerns she mentioned from the different union members from her riding are shared by many union workers clear across this province.

I know that the minister, in a very passionate and theatrical way, has indicated a number of times that the union movement is in agreement with this bill. What he forgets to say is that basically the unions had a gun held to their heads, and it was either this way or all their rights were going to be stripped away and it was going to be right open. This government has worked that way in so many different ways over the last five years.

I mentioned earlier today how municipalities were treated by this government when the downloading exercise started some two or three years ago. The original plan was—and, Speaker, you'll remember; we all heard it in this House—that the local municipalities were going to have to absorb locally \$1 billion worth of programs that had always been paid for by the province. Just about every municipality and municipal organization in this province said: "Look, we cannot do this. No matter where we start cutting, we cannot absorb all these costs." There were then some hastily called meetings that the then Minister of Municipal Affairs and undoubtedly some of the whiz kids in the Premier's office were involved in. They came up with a compromise solution, and that was, "OK, we will only download \$500 million to \$600 million of provincial services to the local level." And the municipalities said, "Well, that is better than the \$1-billion download you were going to give to us." The minister then said in the House that all the municipalities agreed with this. Well, they only agreed with it because the alternative was a lot worse. It's exactly the same with this bill. I find it interesting that we should be discussing

this bill on the same evening that we know that corporate Ontario down on Bay Street is the big winner as a result of today's budget.

Let's look at the facts. The Finance Minister, by his own admission, has agreed that an extra \$5 billion has come into the public purse. And what does he say in his next breath? He says that over the next three to four years he is going to give a \$4-billion tax cut to corporate Ontario. Their corporate taxes, in effect, are going to be cut in half, from the 15% they're paying right now, which is already much lower than it was 20 years ago. Of all the money that came into the public purse 20 years ago, I believe about 25% came through corporate taxes. Currently it's probably less than 10%, and it's going to get even worse than that.

The people of Ontario are not dumb. They know that if they want good-quality services in health care and education, they have to pay for them. We all have to pay for them. And yes, it's all the people's money. If you are saying to one significant sector of our province, the corporations of this province, that at one time you used to pay 25% of the freight or of the total revenue coming into the province and now you're only going to end up paying something less than 7% or 8%, then that money's got to be made up somewhere else.

How is it being made up for? Well, by income tax on personal income and, what's even worse, by sales tax, by gambling tax, by user fees. We can talk about this all night long, but think about some of the user fees that have been initiated just within the last two weeks. How about the family responsibility act? There are all sorts of user fees there now. You want a statement? It costs you \$100. If the government strongly enforces your order against a delinquent parent, the government, in its own wisdom, can decide whether or not to charge your account \$400, and it's all done in a very unilateral way. And we can just go on and on and on.

The people out there know that, yes, they may be getting a little bit more money in their pocket as a result of an income tax cut over the last two to three years, but on the other hand they're paying more, a lot more, in user fees for just about everything that's out there.

Mr Bradley: Highway 407.

Mr Gerretsen: Highway 407, but even user fees of a more global nature.

I really believe this government had a golden opportunity today in its budget to do something for our future generations, to make sure that in the secondary and post-secondary school funding we would once again be the top in the country, that we would want to make our system excellent.

Mr Gill: We are.

Mr Gerretsen: He says, "We are." Well, sir, in university funding we are still 10th out of 10 provinces, and there's nothing in this budget that helps that.

Look at the Ministry of the Environment. Look at it. This is your own document. This is not my propaganda. Let's just take a look at the Ministry of the Environment. The budget currently is \$174 million. You know what it

is for next year? Let me tell you what it is next year: \$158 million. So here we have another \$16-million cut-back. When we look way back two or three years ago, it was well over \$200 million, and yet these people have the audacity to come into this House and say that the environment is better now, that the environmental protection regulations and the enforcement aspects are a lot tougher than they were three or four years ago. You and I know that isn't true because the Ministry of the Environment certainly doesn't have the same number of people doing the necessary checks on your behalf and mine to make sure our environment is safe for ourselves and for our children.

It is all interrelated. We could be talking about this labour relations bill, Bill 69, we could be talking about other aspects of the budget, but what it all basically boils down to is that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.

Where in this budget, for example, does it say anything about doing anything for the homeless out there right now? There's nothing in this budget for affordable housing, and I blame the federal government for that as well. I've gone on record as saying that it is the responsibility of both the federal government and the provincial government to do something about our social housing situation in this country. Nothing has been built, no money has been put into these programs, for the last five years. The housing situation for many, many individuals is getting worse. Maybe not for you and I. Maybe you and I are fortunate to live in nice houses in nice neighbourhoods and that sort of thing, but we know there are many people out there who aren't as fortunate. The waiting lists of our housing authorities, the waiting lists of our social housing organizations out there, are growing all the time, and both senior levels of government are basically turning a blind eye to it.

One further point, and that is that one has to look at the poverty level in this country. By your own admission, times are good, and have been good for the last three or four years. The economy is booming and it's helping an awful lot of people out there. But it's also hurting an awful lot of people, people who have fallen through the cracks, people for whom there used to be a social safety net, and it disappeared for them.

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: You can shout all you want; you know it disappeared for them. You and I are doing better, no question about it. But what about those people who have nobody to speak for them? They're doing a lot worse. Do we really want to live in a society where one of these days we'll be just like some of those places in the United States, where we'll have gated communities?

2040

Mr Bradley: We have them now.

Mr Gerretsen: We have them now, but we'll have them to a much greater extent. That's not the Ontario that I want to live in for myself and for my children.

I say to the government, withdraw this Bill 69 and come out with a new bill that is truly based—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms Martel: We have an important debate going on about Bill 69 tonight, and I'd like to return to it if I can.

I really want to go back to the issue of the hiring hall and the provisions with respect to the changes to mobility. I remember the member for Cambridge saying, "Well, we've got lots of construction going on in Cambridge and this is wonderful." I thought to myself, I wonder how he would feel, though, if any number of construction firms in Toronto got jobs in Cambridge and brought 40% of their workers from Toronto and how he would feel if Cambridge workers, because of the change that allows that in this legislation, then didn't have that work.

I raise that because in our community we have some major construction projects going on. One of them involves the hospital, where people in our community will be asked to raise millions and millions of dollars locally. You want to ensure that at least the people who are going to work are people from our community. The change that I see here is a change that will allow a general contractor, if he wins a bid in Sudbury on part of that hospital construction, to bring 40% of the workers with him from Toronto.

I say to folks, what does that do for our local economy? Some of those projects are going to be big; 40% of 300 is a fair number of workers. If those workers lived in our community, then the wages and salaries they would be paid would continue to circulate in our community. They would be buying goods and services in our community; they would be buying cars in our community. But if 40% of the workers come from somewhere else, they don't have any stake in my community. They're not making any long-term investment. They are taking their wages and salaries and going home and they are buying in their own communities. The government members don't seem to understand that.

If you want to make sure the industry is viable, surely you want to make sure that people can work in construction jobs in their own communities and that the wages and salaries that they earn can be reinvested in their communities. Maybe the government doesn't get it. Maybe they don't understand or maybe they don't care that local workers get jobs in their own communities, because that's not what happens under these changes.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): As I was sitting here listening to the debate on this bill, it dawned on me that if this bill had been brought into the House by the minister and he had just brought this out of thin air with no consultation, there would be hell to pay. They would be screaming and shouting because there was no consultation. So the minister does something different. The minister goes and talks to the unions. The minister goes and talks to the union executives and the business people, the people who are—oh, I don't know—involved in the construction industry, and he consults with them. And they come up with an agreement that creates the bill.

Then we bring it to the House for debate. And then from debate we're going to go to—what was that? I think it was hearings. There are going to be more consultations. They are going to go back to more consultations, to more hearings on the bill.

In my mind, I don't think you can have it both ways. You can't turn around and say, "Well, if you were jamming it through with no consultation we'd be screaming, but if you do consultation, we're going to scream too." You can't have it both ways.

I think the minister did a wonderful job. If the minister turns around and goes out and consults with the unions and consults with the construction industry and they come up with an agreement, how dare anybody question it? They came up with the agreement. Naturally, there is not total unanimity on this particular bill.

Interjection.

Mr Clark: Would the member for Kingston and the Islands tell me one bill that there has ever been total unanimity on? There hasn't been total unanimity. This is a democracy. It doesn't happen. We know that. But when the minister does his job and goes out and consults and comes back with a bill, surely to goodness we should sit back and at least recognize and give credit for good consultation.

Let's proceed with the bill. I support it. It makes complete sense. Get a grip.

Mr Bradley: I think it's the kind of consultation that you undertake. There are two kinds of consultation. There's one where everybody is on a level playing field, the way Dr Robert Elgie, a former Minister of Labour in the Conservative government of William Davis, would have done it. He would have brought people together on an equal footing. It would not have been on the basis of putting the gun to the side of one's head and saying, "Look, if you are a member of a trade union, you either accept a significant compromise on your part—not on the company's part—or you're going to get something much worse." When you consult on that basis you intimidate people into taking the lesser of two evils. That's not a true consultation. It fits the word "consultation" but it's not a true consultation. If you want to have a true consultation, that's what you have to do to be fair.

I heard continued interjections from the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale while the member for Kingston and the Islands was speaking. I was wondering whether these were the same interjections he had when he was running for the Liberal nomination federally in the same riding. He did not win the nomination and is now a Conservative member of Parliament. In the hockey game that is going on out there they refer to such people as opportunists, because they are people who look at an opportunity and jump at that opportunity. There are others like Mr Wood, who has always been a Conservative.

Mr Gill: Point of order, Mr Speaker—point of privilege, I mean.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, no, no point of privilege. You might have a point of order.

Mr Gill: On a point of order, then—I'm a new member so I must learn the rules a little better maybe than some of the members who have been here 25 years, I guess—Mr Speaker, I would like to ask the member to come back to the debate on Bill 69.

The Acting Speaker: Put 30 seconds back on the clock. Member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: There is often some breadth to the debate that takes place in the House. As the member would see, even when he was speaking that was the case.

I also want to say to my friends from eastern Ontario who spoke on this bill that I enjoyed the way they brought the human aspect to this bill, the impact it would have on the average individual in their particular riding.

There have actually been, I would say, a dozen bills that have gone through this Legislature with complete consensus in this House. This is not going to be one of them because there wasn't a true consultation that took place.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I would suggest under the rubric of consultation that the members across the way would do well to listen to the two members who just presented, members who obviously come from their community, who listen to their constituents and bring their voices to this place in a way that you guys will never understand. They're not spending their time when they go home on the weekends on the golf courses and in the hoity-toity clubs of their communities. They're down at the mall, they're on Main Street, they're at church on Sunday, they're at the bingo, they're at the meetings of the labour groups in their community and they're listening to what they have to say. It would do you well to pay attention to the two members who just spoke, the member for Kingston and the Islands and the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, because you guys obviously have not done your consultation. Anybody who has spoken to anybody in the labour movement will tell you that there was no real consultation with them and that this is a sham being presented as a compromise in this instance.

Listen, if you want to talk about consultation, just look at what's happening tonight in this place. We had a budget delivered today that gave all kinds of goodies to your corporate friends and allies, and tonight you're down at some big hall in Toronto here celebrating, salivating at the Albany Club. That's the consultation you do. You talk to these guys, you ask them what would be in their best interests, what would do the trick in terms of their getting more money, and away you go. That's your consultation. I think the member for Kingston and the Islands was absolutely right when he said that this was no more and no less than a redistribution, a process to take money out of the pockets of workers who work hard in the construction industry and put it in the bank account of the corporate sector that owns the company. That's exactly what this is all about.

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The Acting Speaker: Response, the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: I guess the first thing I want to say is that it's rather unfortunate that the House sometimes seems to degenerate into personal attacks upon one another. I certainly don't like to play that way. That's not the way debate should take place here. We saw it happen yesterday with the Premier and our leader. As a matter of fact, the Speaker had to admonish the Premier for doing that. Surely, we can keep the level of debate serious enough without having to make personal attacks upon one another. We do see the world in a totally different way, but I think we all try to represent the people we do represent in the best possible way.

It's my one hope, in the last minute that I have, that the government will not waste any of the taxpayers' money the way it has on advertising for the health care commercials that have been flooding the hockey games. That \$3 million—it's probably up to about \$6 million right now—could have been used a lot better to provide some of the very necessary health care services in the various communities. I can see it happening, that tomorrow there will be a flood of advertisements, not only extolling the virtues of this particular bill, the kinds of ads that would have been put together by the whiz kids and the Minister of Labour, but saying wonderful things about the budget. All of that is a little bit like the old saying that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Yes, there are some people who benefited from the budget, but there are also some people who should have been paid a lot more attention in the budget who didn't get that attention paid to them.

If there's anything that the backbenchers who are still in the House and the minister can do, would you please tell the whiz kids and the Premier not to spend any money on needless advertising? Put it back—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Martin: I do appreciate the opportunity to put some thoughts on the record re this important bill before us tonight, this travesty of justice that's being imposed on the people of this province, on the labour movement, on the construction industry and on every small, local economy across this province.

I find it a stretch right off the bat when the Minister of Labour, who, yes, is here tonight listening to the debate, gets up on his high horse and suggests for a second that this somehow is a deal that was done with the labour movement, that somehow the labour movement is in agreement with this, that they think this is going to be good for them and good for the economy and good for the construction industry as we roll along in Ontario.

If this kind of thing was what the labour movement wanted, if this kind of thing was what the construction tradespeople wanted in the province of Ontario, it would have been done long ago. It would have been done under governments that were much more friendly, co-operative, supportive and understanding of them than this government has proven to be over the last five or six years, as it has taken the helm in this province to give leadership and take us down a road that I suggest to you will not be good for any of us in the long haul.

We have to put this bill into some context, and that's what I propose to do to some degree here tonight. I won't be spending a whole lot of time, although I will spend a few minutes, on the particular details because others will do that and do that better than I. The critic for our party, the member for Hamilton West, spoke last night and the critic from the Liberals will have spoken already and will have spoken in some detail about the particulars in this bill. But it's important that we look at this bill in the context of where it is we want to go as a province, what it is we think we need to be doing to put in place an economy in this province that's stable and sustainable and gives people confidence, the kind of confidence that—Mr Speaker, I've got some really important things to share here tonight with the folks in the House. I don't think there's a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum? Will the Clerk please check?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: I want to thank the members for coming in and giving me the respect that is due in terms of some of the things I have to say re this bill and how important it is that we all participate in the process that takes place here in this place.

Interjections.

Mr Martin: So they've come in and they're going to yak all night. Is that what we're going to do? Is that what this is about?

I was saying that we need to look at this bill in the context of the economy. Yes, at this particular point in time all indicators are that the economy is doing well, except when you get out there into the communities across this province and talk to the men and women who are participating as workers in this economy, you begin to get a sense of what the reality actually is. There's a lot of anxiety. There's a lot of worry. There's a lot of concern. Workers are working two and three jobs to maintain the standard of living that they worked at one job to attain up until five or six years ago, workers who used to have full-time jobs, looking forward to using the skills they were able to develop through their education over a long period of time and perhaps even retiring from that particular occupation to a good pension and a community that has lots of things in it for them to do, that speaks of some happiness and tranquillity in their old age.

The economy we're into in Ontario today is the juxtaposition of all of that, and I suggest to you it's because this government is putting its priorities in the wrong place. This bill that we're debating here tonight is a perfect example of that. It's an attack on an institution that has, for a number of years now, served our province well in terms of creating stability in an industry that could be, without organized labour, just simply all over the map, a very dangerous industry to work in, an industry that takes advantage of people and puts people's health and safety

at risk if there isn't some order, if there isn't some concern, if there aren't some rules and regulations around working conditions, health and safety conditions in the workplace and the kind of money that is available to pay workers so that they will make the investment that is required to learn their skill and become the best they can be.

What this government has been doing for the last five to six years is whittling away at the anchors of what I consider a stable economy, an economy that will be sustainable and will give confidence to the kind of investment you want in a province like Ontario, investment that is long term, investment that creates jobs, investment that gives something back to the community from which it is taking its wealth and investment that is concerned about people and concerned about the institutions that serve those people.

The anchors of a stable economy, in my view, are some of the things that we, as Canadians, have worked together over a long period of time to contribute to, put together and build up so that we were the envy of the world—I have to tell you we're not any more and we're slipping with each day that goes by—but a health care system that's there for people, whether they're working or whether they're not; a health care system that there's for people in good times and in bad; an education system that's there for families, for children and for people, whether they have a job or whether they don't, whether the economy is booming or whether it's experiencing some of the downside that economies that are cyclical experience from time to time; but an education system that's there, that people can take advantage of to learn new skills, to make sure their children can participate and look forward to a good future.

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Of course, along with that, you need community services that are there for all the people who call a particular jurisdiction home; an opportunity for people to recreate, an opportunity for people to participate in cultural activities, an opportunity for people to get together and support each other when there's some difficulty, personal or familial, that comes upon them.

Those are the kinds of things that we as a province and as a country learned were absolutely essential if we were going to be a country that was going to move forward and evolve and become ever more civilized in the way that we support each other and in the way that we surround and prop up and contribute to an economy that works for people and works for communities and works for a jurisdiction.

Some of the vehicles we've used—and I'm going to mention a couple here—to make sure those systems were in place, to make sure the economy we were growing was an economy that was good for people and communities, are governments.

This group of people who got themselves elected in 1995 and again in 1999 have been clear from the beginning that they don't believe in government. They believe smaller government, less government is better. They

don't believe they are the government; they believe they're here to fix the government. I would suggest that at some point they come to their senses and either decide to be what the people of Ontario elected them to be or turn it over and give it up to somebody who actually wants to do that job, who believes in that job, who understands the contribution that government makes to making sure that a jurisdiction has a healthy, viable, sustainable and stable economy; a government that believes you have to put substantial amounts of money into the health care system so that you don't have the kind of turmoil that's in the system we have in Ontario today; a government that's not afraid to put significant dollars and resources into education so that you don't have the kind of situation that's upon us in Sault Ste Marie and Algoma today where you have a school board that has no other choice, given the financial circumstance it faces. Because this government won't come and talk to them about the challenges they face, they're going to have to close some schools down.

In some instances these are schools in small communities that will have no other community centre once those schools are gone. That will be tragic but the members of the government across the way don't seem to be concerned too much about that; not to speak of the fact that they don't have enough money to provide the kinds of programming that we all know we need if we're going to be inclusionary of all the children, all the people who call an area like Sault Ste Marie home and who want to get an education, and those students who need special education.

We have a group of people in Sault Ste Marie today, as we speak, teachers' aides, who are out on strike because what they do, the contribution they make to the education system, is not valued. It's not valued by this government. This government will not recognize some of the difficulties that the Algoma District School Board is having, very simply because they are designated high density as opposed to low density and so aren't getting the money they need to support the system that's necessary in order to make those communities stable, sustainable and confident as they move forward through this millennium.

The other organization that I want to talk about just ever so briefly, because it's connected directly to this bill, is organized labour. The contribution that organized labour has made to all of our communities over a long period of time now, in so many ways, is as obvious as the nose on your face. Folks across the way don't seem to understand that because I guess they've never rubbed shoulders with anybody in the labour movement. When you're socializing on the golf course and at the hoity-toity clubs across this province, rubbing shoulders with the high and the mighty over there, it's hard to get a grip on or understand or feel in any real way the importance of a labour movement, of organized labour and the contribution that organization makes to the communities we all live in.

I look at my own community of Sault Ste Marie. If it weren't for organized labour, the United Steelworkers, we wouldn't have the Group Health Centre in Sault Ste Marie. It wasn't that long ago in Sault Ste Marie when the workers at Algoma Steel could not get health care. Doctors weren't coming to the Soo, and the ones who were coming were too busy to serve the needs of the men and women who worked at Algoma Steel and their families. So the Steelworkers got together and contributed from their own pockets to a fund that ultimately developed a Group Health Centre that provided health care not only for them and their families, but eventually for neighbours, and now for some 50,000 people in the community of Sault Ste Marie.

The Group Health Centre is a beacon of the new way to deliver health care, if this government would only recognize that. I say that knowing that when we were government, we didn't recognize it either and we should have. The point I'm making here tonight is that this is one small way that organized labour, if it's given the ability to be all it can be, to participate in a community in a constructive and positive way, to be recognized, honoured and supported for the efforts it makes, can do extraordinary things for the people of this province.

For this government to systematically, from the day it was elected, diminish and demonize organized labour in the way it has is to do us all a huge disservice, is to do this province a huge disservice. To not understand the contribution that organized labour makes to the issue of building a stable economy, an economy that's sustainable, an economy that generates confidence in people so that they give of their energy and their time by way of their work, an economy that provides the jobs we all want, that has a wage package that allows for a dignified standard of living, a wage package that allows a person to feed their family, a wage package that allows a person to buy the clothing they need, given the very difficult climate that we live—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The Minister of Community and Social Services knows the member for Sault Ste Marie has the floor. You'll have your turn, if you choose, in the next rotation. The member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: Thank you very much, Speaker. From time to time in this place, there are many of us on this side who touch the nerve of the folks over yonder and they start to squeal, which is what they were doing. I don't say that about all the members over there. I know the member for Waterloo-Wellington is a decent guy, and the member from Brampton is OK too, but the rest of them, I don't know where they are coming from. I'm not sure why it is that whenever we speak about certain things on this side, they just can't take it and they begin to squeal.

I was saying that the attack organized labour has had to sustain in this province over the last five or six years is really unfortunate, because given the recognition it deserves and given the support and co-operation it so des-

perately wants, organized labour can contribute in such a constructive, positive and exciting way to the development of communities and to the imposition of an economy that is stable, the kind of economy that puts us out there in the forefront and that organizations like the United Nations, when they do their surveys, find that people around the world envy and would love to be part of.

But alas, we have a bill before us today which is in the same style and is much in keeping with the spirit of many of the other anti-labour bills this government has brought forward, and, as the member for Kingston and the Islands said a few minutes ago, which is not about improving the condition of working men and women in this province, which is not about improving the contribution organized labour can make to the economy of this province, that we know it can make because it has done so over such a long period of time now, but which in fact diminishes and takes away from and in many ways ridicules the contribution organized labour can make to the economy of our province.

There are just a couple of specific things that I want to put on the record, as other people will, that I think are particularly galling and challenging and disappointing in this bill.

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There's a section called the mobility provision, section 163.5, which allows employers to bring 40% of the workers with them to the job, ie, a Toronto company takes 40% of the workers with them to Kapuskasing or Sault Ste Marie or Blind River or Chapleau. Then they can name-hire, pick and choose, who they want and don't want for 60% of the remaining hires. How does this contribute in any significant way to the stabilizing of the local economies of places like Sudbury and Kingston and Timmins and Thunder Bay? It doesn't.

We had a system in place, hammered out over a long period of time between companies and organized labour, that was serving us well. It wasn't perfect—there is always room for growth in good systems—but it was serving us well. Whenever a job came to a place like Sault Ste Marie and it was a unionized company that got the contract, we knew immediately that that was going to be work for our family members, for our friends and neighbours, and that was going to be good for the economy of our region and we were all going to benefit in a myriad of ways because that activity was happening there. As we drove down the street and looked at that work site and we saw the sign and we knew that it was union, we knew that it was good. We knew that there were standards there of health and safety that were as high as you'll find anywhere, that people were working there who lived in our community, shopped in our community, spent that money in our community, and that it would be good for our local economy and would stabilize our local economy.

Section 163.2 to section 163.4, the so-called market recovery sections, may actually allow the employer to expand the already opened door of the mobility clause.

Any labour-cost issue can be taken to arbitration and arbitrators are to rule on the basis of getting as close as possible to the non-union competition. Negotiated requirements for employers to pay travel and room-and-board costs to the workers are clearly fair game for employers to take to arbitration to have lowered or removed altogether. If that isn't a taking away, a diminishing of the role of organized labour in this—and to suggest for a second that somehow organized labour would participate in this, would support it, would be agreeable to putting that kind of provision in legislation, is ludicrous. It's to stretch the truth. I think the Minister of Labour, who has gotten up here a couple of times tonight to say that's exactly what happened, ought to be ashamed of himself, because he's wrong.

If we're interested in a stable economy, if we're interested in an economy that's sustainable and going to serve people and communities well over the next number of years, don't pass this bill.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

Mr Gill: Thank you, Mr Speaker. You got it right this time.

First of all, I want to congratulate the member for Sault Ste Marie. I want to compliment him, because he spoke on this Bill 69. A lot of other members didn't, but he spoke on Bill 69 for exactly three minutes out of the 20 minutes that he had allocated. At least he spoke.

Earlier on, one of the members alluded to the fact, which is totally wrong, that non-union workers are less qualified than unionized workers. I think that's totally wrong. Non-unionized workers and unionized workers, I think, are both equally qualified. I take offence, and I'm sure the workers at large will agree that that is not the distinction. They have the same apprenticeship programs they go through and are well-qualified.

The member for Sault Ste Marie's community, and especially all the border communities, will benefit from this bill, because this bill makes it a more competitive playing field. It does not impose Toronto-based solutions on the communities that cannot afford high wages. As we were doing the consultations a lot of people came to me and said, "It is better sometimes to take less money than to take \$40 and work zero hours; \$40 times zero hours is zero money." In the consultations, when we talked to people, I met some people who were like Liberals: flip-flop. One of the fellows said, "Whenever there are unionized contracts, I work there, and sometimes when there are non-union contracts, I go and work there." So I guess this bill is going to be beneficial to all of them.

Mr Bartolucci: I'd like to offer a few comments on the speech of the member for Sault Ste Marie and thank him for his sincerity. If in fact, as the parliamentary assistant said, the member for Sault Ste Marie only spoke for three minutes, his three minutes were worth a lifetime over on the government side when it comes to fact and reality with regard to speaking about the working person and his contribution to our environment in Ontario.

I would like to suggest that the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, the member for Hamilton Mountain and the member for Prince Edward-Hastings agree with the member for Sault Ste Marie when he said that the mobility issue is a major concern to the labour unions across Ontario, agree with the member for Sault Ste Marie when he says the naming issue is of grave concern to the construction workers across Ontario. I would suggest that the government would do well to listen to the member for Sault Ste Marie when he says that if in fact we're talking about workplace democracy, we might want to put this legislation up to a referendum, which this government across the way believes in. Put a referendum out and see if the construction workers in the province agree with Bill 69.

I would suggest to you that this government would do well to make sure they are very, very cautious about their approach of stripping the collective rights of the construction workers in this province, and also to be very, very cautious of the fact that when they talk about naming 60% of the workers, they are in fact jeopardizing the safety aspect in the construction industry. I don't take that lightly for a second, as I know the member for Sault Ste Marie doesn't. So I would suggest this government would do well to listen to the member for Sault Ste Marie.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Mr Speaker, I'm going to take you up on your suggestion to get up here and make some comments. I want to thank you for the invitation earlier.

I guess what troubles me most is I genuinely believe that the member opposite believes in what he's saying. The only thing I agreed with in his entire speech were the very nice comments he made about my friend the member for Waterloo-Wellington, and the member from Brampton as well.

The member opposite gets up and speaks about jobs, about job creation. I think you've got to fundamentally ask yourself, "What is it going to take to create jobs?" I can't believe the member opposite would honestly believe that higher taxes, more regulation, more debt and the kind of environment we had in this economy in the early 1990s when his party was in government are the answer to creating more jobs, because I think the people of Ontario, the economy of Ontario, spoke pretty soundly when we took a dramatic departure from that role back in 1995.

I listened with great interest to my good friend the member for Sudbury. He talked about stripping rights from contracts. Now that's something he certainly would have no experience with. The member for Sault Ste Marie knows about stripping collective agreements, because while he speaks a good game when he stands up in opposition, he was a member of the government that went into thousands of contracts for the first time ever, almost without precedent, and opened up every single public sector collective agreement in their hands, because

they knew better. What they said was: "It doesn't matter what you negotiated at the collective bargaining table. It's what the NDP caucus wants. It doesn't matter what you signed and what you bargained for. The NDP caucus and the politicians will get their fingers into those collective agreements and they'll decide what's best for the workers."

The member opposite would have some credibility had he actually had the guts to stand up and speak against that type of action when his own party was in government rather than hectoring and lecturing members on this side of the House when we're trying to create jobs and some opportunity.

Mr Bradley: It's always interesting to hear somebody who got into the cabinet by simply spewing forth the government line that was written by the whiz kids now lecture somebody from another party about some independence in terms of his thought when he was in government. What we don't see any more in this Legislature on the government side is people who will vary from the theme or the message that the government has.

I can tell members, from a historical perspective, that there used to be members of the Conservative Party who would do that, and the debate in the Legislature, as a result, was quite good. When I think of people like Dr Robert Elgie, a very bright man, both a lawyer and a brain surgeon; when I think of Bruce McCaffrey, a very bright member of the Legislature for Toronto—

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): He was never here.

Mr Bradley: I was just told by the Minister of Energy that Bruce was never here, but of course he was a very capable member. I think of Roy McMurtry, Bob Welch, people like this who—the late Larry Grossman was not afraid to vary from that point of view. How nice it was to hear in debate some concession. Once in a while you hear the opposition make a concession, they like this or that. You never hear that on the government side any more. It's just the same message over and over again that you're given by somebody else to repeat.

That's most unfortunate because I think there are some people over there who probably have some good ideas of their own on this piece and are not allowed to put forward those. I know there are some members who have certain views on bills and they're expert people in the field. I'd like to hear from those people on the bill, but their views may be at variance with what the government wants.

I certainly want to compliment the member for Sault Ste Marie for his contribution to this debate because I think it was most relevant to the bill and everything surrounding the bill.

Mr Martin: I want to thank the members from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, Sudbury, Ottawa somewhere and St Catharines for participating here.

To suggest for a second that I only spoke for three minutes on this bill clearly reflects the government's lack of understanding of how this bill as part of a larger agenda affects communities and their economies.

The government says this bill has by-in from unions. They don't mention that those unions had a gun to their heads in the form of a promise, that still stands, "If you don't buy this, we take away section 1(4) of the act," which is the double-breasting piece of the act.

The closer one looks at this bill, the more one sees to worry about. Contrary to what the government claims, this bill isn't just about lowering costs to help union firms compete with non-union firms. This bill is about depriving workers of a voice in their working conditions. This bill is about taking away collective bargaining rights. This bill opens the door to discrimination in hiring against older workers, against workers who are health and safety advocates. This bill invites discrimination against small towns and the workers who live there by promising to allow employers to bring in labour from Toronto and to remove their cost of doing so. This bill gives employers the best of both worlds. They get highly skilled union labour and they don't have to pay for it. Shame on you as a government.

If you're trying to attract investment to this province by doing this, government, this is the wrong way to go about it. If you want a stable, sustainable economy in Ontario that gives people confidence, then you have to work more constructively with organized labour and governments and other people in this province who want to participate and contribute in the positive ways that we know they can, but you keep taking away those opportunities from them to do that.

Take another look. Please, for a second, consider the impact of this bill on communities like mine in Sault Ste Marie and Sudbury and Thunder Bay and bring something else forward that we can all support.

The Acting Speaker: It being almost 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2124.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hastings-Frontenac-	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands /	
Broadview-Greenwood	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Kingston et les îles	
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Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
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A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 3 May 2000

Mercredi 3 mai 2000



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 3 May 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ANNIVERSARY OF POLISH CONSTITUTION

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is an honour and privilege for me, on behalf of this House and specifically my colleague Tony Ruprecht, to rise to commemorate a very special day for all legislatures, the May 3 Constitution Day for Poland and Polish Canadians.

The 1791 Polish Constitution was only the second in the world, and the first in Europe, enacted for equal rights, universal education and the state care of orphans and the elderly. The struggle of the Polish people for those kinds of rights over the last few centuries has been an inspiration all around the world. Many of us sitting in legislatures today owe the precedent of that constitution and that ongoing struggle which for my generation became clear at Gdansk for that having taken place.

I'm pleased to remark that today, for the second time, the Ontario Legislature has acknowledged that irrepressible spirit of freedom on the part of the Polish people with a special flag-raising ceremony. In attendance were many distinguished Polish Canadians, including Wanda Bujalska of the Polish Teachers' Association; Maja Kaszuba of the Katyn Family Association; Anna Paudyn of the charitable foundation of the Canadian Polish Congress; Hanna Sokolska of the Protection of Poland's Name and Dignity Committee, Polish Scouting Association; Zofia Rozwadowska and Albina Polatynska, outstanding community volunteers; General Michal Gutowski; Commander Romuald Tyminski; Andrzej H. Mrozewski, chairman of the council of the Canadian Polish Congress; Mieczyslaw Szczecinski, honorary president of the Polish Veterans Association; and Zdzislaw Krynski of the Polish-Canadian Health Professionals Association.

I'm sure I join all members of this Parliament in acknowledging this very special day.

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I'm pleased to rise today to speak on the occasion of the celebration of the anniversary of the Polish Constitution of May 3, 1791, the first modern constitution in Europe and second in the world, second only to the Constitution of the United States of America.

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 3 mai 2000

The Polish Constitution of May 3, 1791, consisted of 11 short but powerful clauses which emphasized freedom, democracy and the principle of inclusion. It was the first document in Europe that included people who were not of noble heritage so that they could participate in nation-building and public law, a document with vision and foresight even by today's standards. For example, it was a document that created the first ministry of national education in the world.

Today, Canadians celebrate with Canadians of Polish background on this special occasion independence and democracy in Poland. It's fitting for us to join them in this celebration because it was a historical moment not only for Poland but for the world. So today, to all the people of Polish background who are here and who are watching us, I say *serdeczna, gratulacje, polakum*.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I rose in the House on April 5 to express my anger and frustration and the concerns of residents on Hamilton Mountain with respect to a threat to health care on Hamilton Mountain. The Hamilton Health Sciences Corp has threatened to close the only acute care hospital emergency room on the mountain, the most growing part of the city.

As well, this would have caused the movement of the regional cancer centre, which was just built for \$41 million, and the move would have cost about \$100 million. I'm delighted to note that much has changed since that date. We now have the Minister of Health's assurance that none of the acute care facilities in Hamilton will close and that the long-awaited expansion of the cancer centre at the Henderson will proceed. We received that news yesterday.

I want to thank the minister and I want to acknowledge today a number of individuals and organizations who played a critical role in reversing a decision which would have led to a health care disaster. A particular thank you to Debbie Mattina, chair of the Save the Henderson campaign; campaign members Brenda Wells, Joanne Webb, Michelle Webb, Jan Ouzas, Robin McKenna; CUPE Local 794—I now know why it's called "organized labour," as they were amazing at helping with the signatures, amassing more than 50,000 themselves—and all of the area MPPs and aldermen.

We all put our political colours aside, worked for our community and got what we needed with respect to

health care in Hamilton-Wentworth. I'd like to acknowledge all who took part in this.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm very pleased to rise today and share with the members of the House the fact that the accounting firm of Hobb, Bakker, Bergin and Hill were kind enough to put on a breakfast meeting with respect to the provincial budget. I can just tell you that, in a very non-partisan way, there were members representing all political aspects of the community, as I suppose you'd put it.

But the biggest, overwhelming compliment of the morning certainly was that they all unanimously agreed that having a balanced budget is an accomplishment that each Ontarian shares. Comments were made about having the lowest small business tax threshold, and initiatives that are common to our agenda were widely supported.

However, the important commitments to health care were very broadly received and it's recognized that this province is taking a leadership role, not just for Ontario and for the sake of our people in this province but indeed for all citizens of Canada. Also, there was a lot of wide acceptance for the over \$1 billion that's going to be committed to the transportation infrastructure in this province.

I just wanted to share in a non-partisan way and publicly thank George Kouri and Victoria Green from the board of trade. Members from the chamber of commerce and the business improvement areas were all in attendance. I can tell you there was wide acceptance for the budget of yesterday.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): We all know that the budget has been balanced at the expense of our children's future. The government should have used today's wealth to secure tomorrow's prosperity. It fails to improve front-line health care services, community homemaking and nursing care, neglects higher education and certainly does not deliver tax fairness, especially when the bulk of the tax cuts go to corporate Ontario.

The property taxpayers and ratepayers are also seeing the results of the downloading to municipalities, with over 600 new and higher user fees initiated by this government over the last five years.

In my community, not only will water and sewer bills be raised by 8% to 13% September 1 in a substantial part of the city of Kingston, but we also know that the electric/hydro rates will go up across this province by probably anywhere from 10% to 15% this fall.

In a province of affluence and wealth, the government must govern for all the people and address the issues of poverty, homelessness and housing for all of the people of Ontario, not just their chosen few.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for Broadview-Greenwood.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Thank you, Speaker. I believe the new name is Toronto-Danforth.

I'm happy to stand today and tell people that yesterday, a few hours after Ernie Eves delivered his budget, I was at the Ralph Thornton Centre along with residents and people from the area and from the Toronto library board trying to find ways to save the Queen-Saulter library. The night before that I was at the Bruce public school strategizing once again with parents, teachers and students on ways to keep that wonderful little neighbourhood school open. Two other Catholic schools in the neighbourhood have already been closed: St William and St Ann. These closures and threatened closures are a direct result of the Harris government cuts to education and downloading to the municipalities.

I would like the members to understand, as they brag about the balanced budget and new tax cuts that are going to primarily benefit the rich once again, that these are some examples of some of the people on whose backs the budget was balanced. Royson James from the Toronto Star got it right today when he said, "Greater Toronto Has Very Little to Smile About Today." No money for public transportation, no money for housing or to deal with the homeless crisis, no money for child care—and on and on. The budget yesterday was a disgrace. They're rolling in money and yet they don't have any to spend on social services and education in our communities.

1340

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I represent a rural riding. The interests of my constituents are very much centred around strengthening our agricultural economy and preserving our way of life in rural and small-town Ontario.

I spent a good part of this winter travelling around Ontario, listening to farmers and rural people to gather their ideas on the future of agriculture and on ways to bring increased prosperity to rural Ontario. As an MPP, I welcomed the opportunity to get out to Huron, Northumberland and Essex counties, as well as towns like Caledonia, Burford and Tillsonburg in my area.

Yesterday's budget confirms our commitment to rural Ontario. Minister Eves announced the creation of a \$600-million Ontario small-town and rural development fund that will boost both economic development and infrastructure renewal in rural areas. Farmers and all rural people will benefit greatly from the 67 tax cuts announced yesterday, most notably from the reductions in personal income taxes and business taxes, and the \$200 taxpayer dividend.

In contrast to urban Ontario, rural Ontario faces different challenges; challenges of distance, population sparsity, post-secondary education, for example. On the road we heard that these challenges must be met. Minister Eves's commitment will go a long way to fostering economic development and to rebuilding our towns and villages in rural Ontario.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The sound we heard in the boardroom of the polluters yesterday was a collective sigh of relief as once again the Harris government put the Ministry of the Environment on the chopping block, slashing another \$16 million, or almost 10%, from its budget for controlling pollution and enforcing environmental laws, bringing total cuts since the Conservatives took office to \$100 million. With substantially fewer resources and one third of their staff already lost, the environment ministry has been decimated by the axe-wielding Harris anti-environment crowd who refer to the environment as the "E word."

The firing of scientists, technicians, enforcement officers and legal staff has left the ministry a shell of its former robust self. Prosecutions are down, fines and penalties have dropped, monitoring has been reduced and virtually every enforcement mechanism has all but disappeared in the Harris government's rush to please corporate polluters and to keep its promise to "get the Ministry of the Environment out of your face."

Even the business elite of the world, who gathered at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January declared that climate change was the greatest challenge facing the world at the beginning of the century. Yet the Harris budget demands huge cuts from the environment and natural resources budgets.

On our highways travellers face gridlock, farmers and conservationists face the taking of their land for ever-widening roadways and people face deteriorating air quality and the depletion of fuel supplies as the Harris regime abandons public transportation completed at a time when local transit commissions need millions for operating equipment and operating expenditures and GO Transit cries out for the expansion of service to such locations as St Catharines and Niagara Falls.

IAN GOUDY

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise in the Legislature today to recognize and congratulate one of my constituents, Mr Ian Goudy, who lives in Ilderton, a few miles north of London. Mr Goudy is one of 14 Canadians who will be receiving the Governor General's medal of bravery, a medal which is awarded for acts of bravery in hazardous circumstances.

On May 21, 1999, Ian Goudy pulled a man from a burning car that had spun out of control, hit a tree, and come to rest in a pool of gasoline spilling from its ruptured tank. Hearing crashing sounds around midnight, Mr Goudy rushed outside his home to witness flames shooting through the sunroof opening and a young man trapped inside the wreck. With complete disregard for his own safety, Mr Goudy reached inside the vehicle, released the driver's seat belt and pulled him from the burning pile of rubble. Sadly, the victim did not survive.

Mr Goudy's act of heroism did not go unnoticed. Queen Elizabeth created the Decorations of Bravery in 1972. In the 25 years since then, more than 2,000 people have received Decorations of Bravery. I commend Mr

Goudy for displaying bravery of a very high order. I would like to ask my colleagues in the House today to join with me in congratulating and thanking Ian Goudy.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): On April 27, the member for Don Valley East rose on a point of privilege to express concern about a letter that was sent by the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore. Specifically, the member for Don Valley East took exception with the portion of the letter which read, "... private members' bills never receive support from the government as they are designed to oppose existing legislation and embarrass the government."

As the member correctly stated, privileges are rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by the members of the House individually. As Speaker Sauvé has stated, "There must be some connection between the material alleged to contain the interference and the parliamentary proceedings for there to be a breach of privilege."

The member also raised the issue of contempt. Contempt is defined as "any act or omission which obstructs or impedes [the] House ... in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any member or officer in the discharge of their duties. All breaches of privilege are contempts of the House, but not all contempts are necessarily breaches of privilege."

In the case at hand, as opposed to the case cited by the member and ruled on by Speaker Stockwell in 1997, the letter does not have any direct adverse implications upon the assembly. It is the opinion of one member directed to an individual. The letter may contain remarks about the tactics of the government and opposition, but they are not a direct reflection on the Legislature. The letter expresses the opinion of one member only, an opinion that was in fact disproved on the very day the member for Don Valley East raised this point, when the House did in fact give second reading to an opposition private member's bill, Bill 2, standing in the name of Mr Kwinter.

It is not in the nature of government advertising and broadcasting throughout the province. While members may disagree with the arguments expressed in this letter, it does not impede any member from introducing a bill, nor does it prevent the Legislature from considering this bill. It does not cause any member to come here without the uncontested ability to continue the debate on this issue.

I therefore find there has been no breach of privilege nor a case of contempt. I would, however, like to thank the member for Don Valley East for raising this matter.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the eighth report of the standing committee on government agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RAVES ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LES RAVES

Mrs Pupatello moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 73, An Act to promote public peace and safety by regulating late-night dance events / Projet de loi 73, Loi visant à promouvoir la paix et la sécurité publiques en réglementant les danses nocturnes.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): The purpose of this bill is to regulate parties known as raves. Some members may be aware of this latest dance trend and the easy access to the drug ecstasy, which is often found in use at these raves. If this bill is passed, it would, among several things, allow cities to issue permits and set the conditions for these raves and hold the promoter and the property owner responsible when and if they are in violation of the act.

After a lengthy discussion with cities and police authorities, I believe the bill affords municipalities the strength they need to regulate what has become an unsafe and frankly downright dangerous trend at raves. We advanced the statistics from the coroner's office, which were up until October 1999, and nine young people had died. Since that time, there have been four more deaths of young people by the drug ecstasy. I don't think we have time to wait and I truly hope this bill is passed quickly and will be up for debate on May 18.

1350

MOTIONS

REFERRAL OF BILL 68

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move that, pursuant to standing order 72(a), the order for second reading of Bill 68, An Act, in memory of Brian Smith, to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health

Care Consent Act, 1996, be discharged and the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The motion is carried.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, I request unanimous consent to move a motion that the House sit tonight from the usual time of 6:45 till 9:30.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I am afraid I heard some noes.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Speaker: Earlier today we were informed that the Premier, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health would not be here to answer questions, but we were told that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities would be and we would like to have her here to answer questions.

The Speaker: I know it is a little bit difficult because the times vary and sometimes we get through a lot quicker than others. If we could, though, it is important to get here on time. Terrific, the minister is making it. It is time now for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I must tell you that upon first seeing the budget document I was very optimistic about what was going to be in it for Ontario's young people, because it made specific reference to "brighter futures." Not only did it make specific reference to "brighter futures," it also had a picture on the cover showing some Ontario young people. I thought for sure this bespoke much, that surely this budget would contain good news for our young people and their families when it comes to higher education in Ontario. I also of course understood, as you do, that Ontario ranks 59th out of 60th among our North American competitors when it comes to investment in higher education.

Minister, how could you possibly have allowed this budget to be introduced by this government, your government, without doing anything further in any substantive way for Ontario's young people?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): This government has applied more money, over \$4 billion, to post-secondary education than any other government in the province of Ontario. Just this year, and with this budget yesterday,

we announced some \$286 million in new SuperBuild investments, which brings that amount of money up to \$1.8 billion for our students in the future as we plan and work with them for accessibility to our universities and colleges right across Ontario.

I am quite surprised at the tenor of this question given the record of this government, which put students first and has promised a place for every qualified and motivated student in our post-secondary system, now and in the future.

Mr McGuinty: The facts speak for themselves. In the first year of this new millennium you are investing \$200 million less than was invested in 1996. We just learned today that medical school tuition has gone up from \$13,000 a year to over \$14,000 a year. Those are the facts. This is as a result of your capable efforts on behalf of Ontario's young people to ensure that they all find room in the university inn. Do you know what you're doing, Minister? You are effectively using 1996 dollars for our young people and asking them to compete in 2001. That's like asking a 486 computer to outperform a Pentium III. It doesn't matter how hard they work; they just can't catch up.

Our students are about to enter into the most important race of their lives. That's the race to get the best high-value-added jobs here in our province. If they can get that, then we have a secured future. Minister, again I ask you, how much more short-sighted could you have gotten than to fail to live up to your responsibilities to represent their interests in this budget?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I could go through the list, and the first part of the list is that we've added some 24 new buildings in SuperBuild. Secondly, we are helping our students by making our programs more accessible. Young people now will be able to earn \$1,700, as opposed to \$600, during their study time, and this will not be against their OSAP qualifications.

Our Ontario graduate scholarships: \$3,500 for our graduate students, increasing in number, so that we will have our graduate students moving on into research and development, which is so important for the competitiveness of our country. Secondly, it's very important so that we have more professors down the road, young people who aspire to be teachers in our colleges and our universities. Our young people want jobs at the colleges and universities and we've increased that as well. That's just accessibility. That's helping students. They are our first priority.

Mr McGuinty: This minister likes to talk about capital dollars. I'm talking about operating dollars. The fact is that our children today, the echo generation, are marching through our primary and secondary schools and they'll shortly be knocking on the doors at our universities. Do you know what you're telling them? You're telling them, "There is no room for you here, but I'm inviting in American private universities and you can be my guest and pay those people \$40,000 for your tuition over there." That is not living up to your responsibility and your government's commitment to ensure that our

young people find space in publicly funded, affordable universities.

Minister, my question is, do you really understand that your failure to invest in higher education, your failure to make places in affordable, publicly funded universities for our young people is resulting in the fact that we will no longer have a bright future collectively in terms of our economy? Do you get that?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: In response, I am very saddened by the leader of the official opposition, who I remember to be a person who encouraged young people to aspire for the best. Today he's only repeating what he said last week, when he talked about sitting around the kitchen table telling people that the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the minister take her seat. Member for Windsor-St Clair, come to order. We can't have shouting across. I can't hear. As I said before, some heckling is allowed, but when you constantly do it and there's no let-up, I can't let that go on. Minister, sorry for the interruption.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I'm disappointed in the leader of the official opposition, because it is important that we tell our young people that there will be a space for every qualified and motivated student at our colleges and universities.

We are making a plan and we started with this plan immediately. Yesterday we enhanced the plan so that 73,800 new spaces through new buildings will be available for these young people who will be aspiring to go to our universities. I actually think that it is totally irresponsible for the leader of the official opposition to sit around his kitchen table or be at anybody else's kitchen table telling these young people there won't be space. We have a plan and there will be space for every qualified and motivated student, and that budget yesterday added another \$200 million for that problem.

1400

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of the Environment, another minister who has obviously abandoned his responsibilities as well. Going into yesterday's budget lock-up, I thought for sure that of all the areas that these people were not going to touch, of all the areas that these people would not cut, surely they would not cut the Ministry of the Environment. They've already cut it by some 40%. I thought for sure they wouldn't touch that. I thought for sure we had a new person at the helm who would be there and say to Mike: "There's no way. You're not getting any money from me. I'm here to defend our environment."

But you know what happened? This minister agreed to a further 9% cut of the Ministry of the Environment in our province. Minister, tell me why did you fail to stand up for our interests when it comes to our natural

environment? Why did you fail to stand up for clean air and clean water in Ontario?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): Nothing can be further from the truth. In fact, in 1999-2000, the ministry successfully accelerated water and sewage grants to municipalities. The 2000-01 budget will contain \$51 million for water protection to meet the remaining commitments to accelerate and pay out grants—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the minister take his seat. The member for Windsor West, please come to order. Minister of the Environment.

Hon Mr Newman: As I was saying, that will give the opportunity to pay out the grants to municipalities that met the eligibility requirements but did not have the final cost estimates for the 1999-2000 budget.

The Leader of the Opposition also fails to note that we've committed to establish \$6 million province-wide for a ground water monitoring network and the continuation of our work in climate change. He also failed to talk about the establishment of a \$1-billion SuperBuild millennium partnerships initiative which includes environmental projects, and I want to assure all members that I'll be working closely with the SuperBuild Corp and our partners to champion environmental projects.

I remain committed to the protection of Ontario's environment as we continue to set and enforce tough environmental standards in our province.

Mr McGuinty: I can well appreciate that this minister is reduced to baffle-gab, because he's done nothing of substance to move forward on the environment front. All this government has done is to look to the Ministry of the Environment for purposes of cuts, for purposes of taking money away. You would have thought that, with all of this money rolling in, today was the perfect time to begin to build up our investments in the Ministry of the Environment so we have everything that we need to better police and prosecute polluters in Ontario. You'd have thought that's what this government would have done. Instead, they were reduced to cutting it one more time.

Minister, you should know what they're doing in the United States of America. In their latest budget, under the Environmental Protection Act they have greatly—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The leader of the official opposition, sorry for the interruption.

Mr McGuinty: I guess I touched a nerve there, Speaker.

This year the United States budget contains the single largest increase ever for the Environmental Protection Agency. Our competitors south of the border are beefing up their ability to patrol, regulate, monitor and prosecute when it comes to pollution. Why is it that here in Ontario we are going in the opposite direction?

Hon Mr Newman: I rather enjoyed the question from the Leader of the Opposition. In fact, I would suggest to him that you ought to be spending more money on your

research rather than relying on a daily newspaper for your research.

Again, this is a true Liberal question, taking both sides of an issue. Here we're talking about the Americanization of the Ontario environment. That's what the member opposite wants. He's talking about both sides of the issue. Perhaps he learned that on his trip to Washington, with his high-priced American consultants in Washington. What he said here today—nothing could be further from the truth.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Now apparently we've also got to contend with verbal pollution in this province. What we should have done is seized the moment in Ontario—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member come to order. Her leader's waiting to ask the question. Sorry for the interruption. The leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: It would seem to me that if we apparently have \$4 billion for corporations in Ontario, and if we have \$650 million available for those who like to play the stock markets, surely we could have found a few million dollars to beef up our ability to patrol, regulate, monitor and enforce our laws in Ontario when it comes to pollution. Surely we should have been able to do that.

You know what you should have done, Minister? You should have taken the opportunity to invest in the protection of our air and our water. You could have cracked down on polluters. You could have converted our coal-burning plants to natural gas. You could have devoted more money to cleaning up the Great Lakes toxic hot spots. You could have made real steps towards lowering sulphur in gas. Those are all things that you could have done. Instead, like the Minister for Colleges and Universities, when Mike Harris came asking for money, you said: "Take all you want from me. I have nothing here to protect." Tell me, Minister, why should you remain in your job if you're not prepared to do it?

Hon Mr Newman: I think what the Leader of the Opposition failed to recognize is that much of the funding from the previous year was one-time funding. There were programs and funds that were paid out over the last few years. There was one-time funding. We're actually starting to see the final payments being made.

With respect to the Great Lakes, as the Leader of the Opposition brought that subject up, I can tell him that the Great Lakes have been cleaner than they've been in decades as a result of this government.

He raises the issue of sulphur in gasoline. It's incumbent upon the federal environment minister and the Prime Minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Take a seat. Order. I thank the Minister for Education. I'll deal with it. Stop the clock for a minute please.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): You're on the wrong page of the binder.

The Speaker: Yes, thank you very much. I will deal with it.

Let me say this: Today, we're obviously in a mood where people have a lot of energy, except the pages and myself, who have to stand up all the time. I can't continue on when I can't hear what's going on and there's shouting across. As I've said on a number of occasions, I don't mind some heckling, but when it's constant and when it's continued right through and I can't hear, I'm going to have to stand up. We're getting to the point now where I'm going to have to warn people the second time and so I'd appreciate all the member's co-operation. What happens in a situation like this when one side gets going is that the other side gets going and then they're shouting back and forth. Nobody can get their clips on TV because you can't hear anything, and that doesn't serve anybody's purpose. I appreciate the co-operation. I am going to have to get a little bit quicker on some of the members in warning them. I just want them to know that so that they aren't surprised, but we are getting awfully noisy today.

Again, sorry for the interruption. The minister may continue.

Hon Mr Newman: The point I was trying to make with respect to sulphur in gasoline is that it is clearly the federal government that has the responsibility on sulphur and gasoline. So next time the Leader of the Opposition's in Ottawa maybe he talk to the Prime Minister and maybe he can talk to the federal environment minister and ask them to take a strong stand on reducing sulphur in gasoline.

1410

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. Yesterday's budget shows that you see Ontario as a big Monopoly game. If you pass go, you collect \$200, and if you're rich, you put four hotels up on the property. But in Monopoly, if you don't become rich very quickly, you're out of the game. And that's exactly how it is with your budget. When you do the numbers, you have only one cent for health care for every dollar that you gave away in tax cuts. You try to peddle the myth that the tax cuts are for the middle class, but when you do the numbers there, a family with an income of \$30,000 may get \$100 out of the tax cut, but a high-income earner, with \$330,000, gets \$10,000 out of your tax cut. That's the reality of it: mega tax cuts for the well off.

Minister, you have frozen the minimum wage for five a half years—five and a year half years with no increase. Can you tell us, if you have mega tax cuts for the well-off, didn't minimum wage workers at least deserve a raise after a five-and-a-half year freeze?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): As all the people of Ontario know, the tax cuts have created tremendous economic growth in this province, combined with the other policies that are pro-growth that the Mike Harris government has implemented in the last five years. You also know that the tax

system is more progressive now, under the Mike Harris government, than it was under the NDP regime five years ago. There are more low-income working people off the tax rolls. If you're talking about the best way to help people help themselves, it's to give them a job. With our policies, you've had record numbers of jobs created in this province.

I remember five years ago in this very House when the NDP and the Liberals ridiculed our promise of creating over 700,000 net new jobs. As you heard yesterday, the Minister of Finance announced that we've created to this date 701,000 net new jobs. The thanks and the credit for that goes to the hard-working people of Ontario who have made this province again a great place to live and to work and to raise a family.

Mr Hampton: We're certainly seeing a new definition of "progressive" when someone with an income of \$330,000 gets a \$10,000 tax cut and someone with an income of \$30,000 gets a \$100 tax cut. But it's even less progressive than that because 25% of Ontario taxpayers have such a low income that they don't pay provincial income tax, so they don't even get this \$200 that you're talking about giving when someone passes go. The lowest-paid workers in the province don't even get that. That's one million people who are left out right there.

This budget also does absolutely nothing for affordable housing. CMHC tells us that in your Monopoly game, where the landlords are getting it all, in Toronto an average two-bedroom apartment now costs \$1,236 more than it cost a couple of years ago. But a worker with an income \$20,000 or \$30,000 only gets \$100 out of your so-called tax cut. Tell me, Minister, how is it that you can afford mega tax cuts for the well-off, but somebody who needs affordable housing got absolutely nothing out of this budget?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The NDP's fiscal policies spoke for themselves for the five years that they were in government. Their policy on taxation drove wealth and jobs away from this province. It created record numbers of people who were trapped in the social assistance system.

Our policies have liberated almost half of the number of people who were on welfare when you were in power, and it's because we want to be competitive. Even Bob Rae, your former leader, acknowledges now that in a global economy your tax rates have to be competitive with the world if you want to retain jobs and attract investment to create more jobs.

Our agenda is a pro-growth agenda. Your questions about how to redistribute wealth by taxing everything that moves clearly don't work. They have worked no place in the world. Our policies of growth and of attracting investments are leading the way again for Canada, particularly right here in the province of Ontario, and the numbers speak for themselves.

Mr Hampton: The questions were: Don't low-paid workers deserve a raise? Don't people who are seeing rents go sky-high deserve some opportunity at affordable housing? After all, they work too, Minister.

I want to ask about another part of Ontario that was completely left out. We have pleaded now for over five years that you bring in an act for disabled Ontarians, an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, to ensure that they have access to opportunity in this province and physical access to buildings. We have again seen mega tax cuts for corporations; we see a mega-giveaway to those who already have a lot. Minister, if you can give that amount away to your corporate friends, couldn't you at least bring in an Ontarians with Disabilities Act so that the disabled could share in some of the wealth you're giving away as well?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I know that the Minister of Citizenship and Culture would like to bring some relevance to this discussion.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I would like to say that there was some very good news in the budget yesterday for people with disabilities. We doubled the employment support budget under ODSP from \$18 million to \$35 million. Also, let me say that in that budget we reaffirmed the fact that we are coming forward with an action plan; we reaffirmed the fact that we would come forward in a comprehensive approach where we would look at those programs and legislation; we reaffirmed the fact that this government will move forward with a disability act within the economic goalposts that were defined in the Common Sense Revolution; and we once again confirmed that we're committed to people with disabilities in the province.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is for the Minister of the Environment. I want to ask the Minister of the Environment why, when your government could give away so much to corporations, all you could do for the Ministry of the Environment was cut another \$16 million from the budget—another cut? Since 1994-95, it amounts to a \$100-million cut of the budget, and 40% of the enforcement staff are gone. Your own ministry staff said in their February 1999 delivery strategy that you don't have the resources to enforce all of our environmental laws.

Today you have a surplus. Can you explain, Minister, when you had so much money to give away to corporations, why the Ministry of the Environment at least couldn't get a sufficient budget so you could go out there and enforce our laws and protect our environment?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): The leader of the third party is very selective in his facts and fails to mention that we spent \$200 million on the provincial water protection fund; \$5 million on the Ontario Great Lakes Renewal Foundation; the fact that there's \$51 million for water protection in the budget this year; \$6 million for a province-wide ground water monitoring network and the continuation of our work on climate change; again I'm going to mention SuperBuild. There's \$1 billion for the SuperBuild millennium partner-

ships initiative, which includes environmental projects. That was clearly mentioned in the budget yesterday. I'll commit to the leader of the third party that I will work closely with the SuperBuild Corp and our partners to champion environmental projects again.

Mr Hampton: The minister mentions facts. I want to mention a few facts. You've allowed the importation of hazardous waste to quadruple under your watch. You have allowed Ontario Power Generation to buy pollution credits so they can exceed the air pollution limits. Your budget allocates \$1 billion for highway construction, which means more cars, more trucks, more pollution, and not one cent for public transit. Minister, this budget, from beginning to end, is bereft of any sort of strategy for protecting our environment, enhancing our environment. I ask you again, when you have mega-billions of dollars to give away to your corporate friends, some of whom are the worst polluters in Ontario, why don't you have the money to at least go out there and enforce the environmental laws that we have?

Hon Mr Newman: I'd encourage the leader of the third party to go beyond the budget and look at what the government's doing with respect to such programs as the Drive Clean program, the pilot emissions reduction trading project, Ontario's anti-smog action plan, landfill management regulations, and the environmental regulations that are in place for the new competitive electricity market. We've done a great deal to improve the quality of the air, the land and the water in this province.

1420

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Housing. Yesterday's budget failed to use today's wealth to secure tomorrow's prosperity, especially when it comes to our poorest and our most vulnerable—our homeless. We hear there was \$5 billion more in revenue than had been anticipated, and you would think, Minister, in keeping with your responsibilities, that you would have thought that some of that \$5 billion might be appropriated to help out our most vulnerable here in Ontario. We searched for this in the budget and there was nothing to be found. Not a single line. Not even a passing reference. Minister, tell me, why have you forsaken your responsibility when it comes to protecting our most needy and our most vulnerable here in Ontario—our homeless?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Perhaps I should remind the honourable member of some of our prebudget announcements, because we wanted to do as much work as possible as early on as possible. As soon as we signed the housing deal with the federal government, we were able to release \$50 million for up to 10,000 Ontario families who needed rent-geared-to-income supplements, and that was announced in November. If the honourable member wants to know what we have done lately for people who are at risk of being homeless or are homeless, we can

stand by our numbers any day of the week and the evidence is right there.

Mr McGuinty: This minister should be ashamed of himself for making any kind of a pretense of helping out the homeless here in Ontario. Let's look at the facts. Homelessness is up in Barrie, it's up in Hamilton, it's up in Peterborough, it's up in Guelph, it's up in Kitchener, it's up in Waterloo, it's up in Ottawa-Carleton, it's up in Peel, it's up in North Bay, it's up in Brantford, it's up in Sarnia and it's up in Toronto.

Among the homeless population, the fastest growing group is single mothers and children. The wait for a family needing social housing in Toronto, Minister, is now 25 years. When are you going to start in a real and substantive way to protect the interests of our homeless? Again I ask you, why have you forsaken the homeless in Ontario?

Hon Mr Clement: I acknowledge that it is taking some time to fix the mess that was inherited from previous governments that tried, through more taxing and more spending and more regulation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the minister take his seat. Member for Windsor-St Clair, last warning. Minister.

Hon Mr Clement: More taxing and more spending and more regulation, which created more of a problem than they inherited in the first place—

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Tell us about the permanent shelter in Brampton on your watch.

The Speaker: Member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, last warning as well. Minister.

Hon Mr Clement: We need not apologize for the amount of work that Minister Baird is doing, that I am doing and that many other members of the cabinet are doing to face these problems: \$100 million in new dollars in commitment for the homeless and the near-homeless; an extra \$50 million for rent-geared-to-income—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister take his seat. Member for Don Valley East, his last warning, and member for Hamilton West. If we have to go through everybody, I will, but I warn you, it's your last warning and you'll be out, and we could do it. Minister, sorry.

Hon Mr Clement: No problem, Mr Speaker. Overall, \$2 billion of taxpayers' money is spent on the homeless or on those at risk of being homeless, by this government of Ontario. If the honourable member—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister take his seat. I'm sorry, the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale can't continue. I will have to name him. I warned him. He cannot continue to shout out. I ask him to leave the chamber.

Mr Smitherman was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker: Just so the members know, I was slow in getting the clock stopped. We are going to hold the clock for 10 seconds—the clerks at the table are going to do that—and then the clock will begin. It was because of

my error we did that, not theirs. I was slow getting off the mark. I apologize to the table; they don't like to do that. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon Mr Clement: We on this side of the House take this problem seriously. We are not involved in rhetoric; we are involved in action. It's issues that involve mental health. It's issues that involve housing. It's issues that involve social services. It's issues that involve prosperity. On this side of the House, we believe we have guaranteed more prosperity in this province through this budget than this province has ever seen in history.

If the honourable member wants to spend some time doing something that is fruitful, perhaps he should attend with his federal Liberal caucus members who have done the square root of zero to help tackle this problem. That would be helpful.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Last week you announced that some significant reforms were coming to Ontario's system of post-secondary education. In particular, you announced that Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology, like Centennial College in my riding of Scarborough Centre, would be permitted to offer applied degrees on a pilot project basis. As I understand it, applied degrees refer to advanced programs offered through colleges that mix theory and practice to teach advanced skills to students.

Could the minister provide this House with more information about applied degrees and this new choice that will soon be available to Ontario students?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): Thank you to my colleague from Scarborough Centre for the question. In today's world our colleges are extremely competitive, and the students and employers are demanding that they be even more competitive. Being closely focused on the needs of the employers, and of course having high standards right now, they came forward and asked that we consider that about eight pilot projects be offered in our colleges. Howard Rundle, the chair of the committee and president of the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario, stated, "This significant and visionary action by government recognizes the quality of Ontario college programming, the needs of Ontario students and the job market. Applied degrees will give students greater choice in the knowledge economy."

Ms Mushinski: I thank the minister for that answer.

In the case of applied degree projects and private universities, many of my constituents are concerned that this expansion of our post-secondary education system must be done with concern for the quality and integrity of the system in mind. Students, parents and employers will need to know that a new applied degree program offered at their local college is of high calibre and will be respected once they graduate.

Students attending private universities also need similar assurances. Students will want to know that the program they are studying is of high calibre and that the institution they are attending is credible and legitimate. Minister, what steps are you taking to ensure that any new private universities and college applied degree programs are deserving of provincial recognition?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: An important question, and I'd like to respond in this way: Any new degree programs in Ontario will have a quality assessment board to assess the programs and the quality of any degree, whether it be from a university or a college applied degree, to make sure that our students are benefiting, that the qualifications they have and that any degree they have will stand up to the standards we enjoy now, standards that will be important for our young people as they apply for jobs in business and industry, which may require them to compete around the world. The board will have a mandate to assess the new degree programs. They will also have a mandate to assess any programs from any out-of-province institution that may qualify to set up business in Ontario.

1430

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): This question is for the Minister of Transportation. When we went through the budget yesterday, we hoped that with all of this money rolling in as a result of a healthy American economy, surely there would be money available for public transit here in Ontario. We thought most certainly there would be money available for public transit. This minister's own staff has told him that road traffic in the GTA is going to increase to by 250% over the next 20 years, and it's not just a matter of gridlock and drivers' convenience. This is also all about air quality and our health. We now know that we spend over \$1 billion annually in Canada on health care costs that are related to driving and exhaust fumes. Minister, not only have you missed the bus when it comes to public transit, you've made sure the bus isn't even going to show up.

I'm asking you, Minister, like all of the other ministers who have abandoned their responsibilities under this budget, why did you abandon your responsibility to ensure that we continue to invest in public transit so not only do we have greater convenience in our hectic lives that we lead, but we have better air to breathe?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): Dalton, Dalton, Dalton, instead of going out and making a fool of yourself on television last night, perhaps you should have been reading the budget.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock for a quick moment. Minister of Transportation—

Interjections.

The Speaker: He did withdraw it. I appreciate he has withdrawn. I'll just remind all members the reason we use the name of the ridings is because when we come in

here, we represent all the people. That's also one of the reasons we don't have personal accusations going back and forth, because when you do that, you're not only insulting the member but all of the people who voted for the member as well. I know that the new ridings are difficult to get used to, but I thank the member for withdrawing it and appreciate his co-operation.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I absolutely withdraw it. But I will repeat the fact that perhaps you should have been spending yesterday evening reading the budget documents and understanding them instead of blowing absolute nonsense out to the media.

As part of local services realignment, we created significant tax room for municipal transit, and it was a fair trade that was made. But in addition, yesterday the finance minister announced a \$1-billion SuperBuild millennium partnerships initiative, and municipalities can certainly apply for infrastructure in this area. So read the document and try to understand.

Mr McGuinty: This has to be the be-all and the end-all. I asked the Minister of Transportation what he's doing to move forward when it comes to investing in public transit in Ontario and he talks to me about tax room. I'll suggest that he tell all of our children who are clogging hospital emergency wards in Ontario as a result of suffering from asthma to talk to them about tax room.

This minister is failing his responsibility to protect our health. He's failing his responsibility to protect air quality in Ontario. It's not just a matter of convenience. It's not just a matter of gridlock. It's a matter of health. Don't talk to me about tax room. Tell me what you're doing in a real and concrete way to protect our air quality by investing in public transit.

Hon Mr Turnbull: Unlike the federal government, that talked about creating tax room in 1977 and then re-occupied the area, we've reduced taxes in this province. We have created tax room for the municipalities, \$2.5 billion, something you couldn't conceive of because you were so interested in taxing and spending when you were the government.

SENTENCING

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Attorney General. Recently, it's been reported that criminals convicted of serious offences have been able to serve their sentences in Ontario communities like Cobourg, Campbellville and Quinte West, instead of in a correctional facility. This is troubling to me and to my constituents, particularly when we've been doing so much in this province for security and looking after law and order. We've brought in 1,000 new police officers. We brought in Christopher's Law for the registry of sex offenders. We brought in rural crime teams. We brought in an enforcement unit to look after motorcycle gangs. We brought in community safety zones, protections against aggressive panhandling, the Victims' Bill of Rights, increased numbers of crown attorneys, increased numbers of special courts for domestic violence. We in-

troduced youth justice committees and tougher standards on parole, and we're expanding the DNA crime lab.

Can the minister please explain to the House why criminals are able to serve their sentences in the community instead of in jail?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for Northumberland for the question on the serious matter of conditional sentences being used for serious and violent crimes in Ontario. In 1996 the federal Liberal government amended the Criminal Code to allow for conditional sentences. That type of sentence allows an offender who has been sentenced to two years less a day, and whose offence does not carry a minimum sentence, to serve their sentence in the community, which is fine except for the use from time to time, regrettably, of conditional sentences for serious and violent crimes in Ontario.

On January 31, this year, the Supreme Court of Canada decided that because of the wording of the Criminal Code as it is now in section 742.1, conditional sentences are available for those types of serious and violent crimes. The Liberal government in Ottawa can change that. They can amend the Criminal Code. They should have done it in 1996. We've been asking them to do it now. I wrote to the federal Minister of Justice on February 2. I asked her to bring in the amendments during the current sittings of the House of Commons. Why don't they do it? They're putting Ontario communities at risk.

Mr Galt: As a government, we are indeed committed to improving the safety and security of everyone in the province in all aspects of our lives. As you look at our budget, some of the things we're particularly committing to are \$35 million to community policing partnerships, \$2 million for special OPP teams to control computer crimes and another \$2 million for special OPP teams for snow trails and waterways, \$4 million for fighting organized crime, \$3 million for youth justice committee pilot projects, 165 new probation and parole officers, \$1 million to establish an office for the victims of crime, \$10 million to expand the domestic violence court program, and \$10 million for a program to support women and children experiencing domestic violence.

I'd like to know, what has the minister been doing to reduce the use of conditional sentencing in Ontario?

Hon Mr Flaherty: We're talking here about sexual assault. We're talking about sexual assault on children. We're talking about assault with weapons. We're talking about driving offences resulting in death and serious bodily injury. These are serious offences. Our view is that conditional sentences are not appropriate for serious and violent offences like the ones I have mentioned.

After the Supreme Court decision on January 31, as I indicated to the House, I wrote to the federal minister again. I asked her to take action. She has not done so yet. I hope she does so during the current sittings of the federal House of Commons. It's a simple amendment to

the Criminal Code. It can be done and it ought to be done to protect the people of Ontario.

In Ontario, I've done what we are able to do. On April 20 I issued a directive to Ontario's crown attorneys advising them that conditional sentences should not be recommended by the crown where the need to denounce and deter the offender's conduct is paramount in cases of serious—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Attorney General's time is up.

1440

HEALTH CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): A question for the Acting Premier: There are over 100 communities in northern Ontario that are short of doctors. In fact they are short more than 450 doctors, and the problem with specialists is even worse. I looked at your budget. Your tuition fee proposal might put a doctor somewhere in northern Ontario in seven or eight years. It'll take longer for specialists. Your agreement with the Ontario Medical Association actually makes it more attractive for new doctors to locate in over-served areas, which makes it more difficult to get them to northern Ontario.

I looked in your budget for a little bit of money for a northern Ontario medical school so we could train our own. Nothing. Minister, when you had billions of dollars to give away to your corporate friends and to the most well-off in this province, can you tell us why you didn't care to do anything to solve the doctor shortage problem in northern Ontario?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The leader of the third party knows this is a very serious problem, the doctor shortage, not just in northern Ontario, which is quite acute, but throughout rural Ontario as well. I think he should read the budget a little more carefully. There are a number of initiatives that are specifically designed to address the doctor supply issue across Ontario, and particularly in the underserved areas.

There is \$11 million annually to address the McKendry report. There is \$100 million to expand primary care, which will have an impact on addressing the physician supply. There is \$4 million for free tuition for students willing to practise in rural and northern areas. There is free tuition for medical students who relocate to underserved areas. These are all steps that are designed to address a very serious problem.

Clearly there is more that needs to be done—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the member's time is up. Supplementary.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Not only did your government do nothing to ensure that northern families who desperately need family doctors are going to get them soon, but you did nothing to resolve the discrimination that you're practising against northern cancer patients.

Minister, the chair of Cancer Care Ontario's northeast committee, Gerry Lougheed Jr, has been lobbying your government for months now to try and get your government to cover 100% of the costs of accommodation, food and travel for northern cancer patients too. Your minister yesterday provided a selective quote from 1999 from Mr Lougheed. I'm going to provide you some more recent quotes with respect to this very issue.

On April 29, in the Sudbury Star, Mr Lougheed said, "This government is practising a form of health care apartheid for patients in northern Ontario."

"The discrepancy between subsidies for northerners and southerners 'is a tremendous inequity. This is totally unacceptable, as far as I'm concerned.'"

"We feel very frustrated that this has still not been addressed," he said, adding Premier Mike Harris should consider intervening in the issue. 'I think the Premier has to be held accountable on this too, because he represents Nipissing riding and he is letting down northerners.'"

Minister, in your budget yesterday you had billions of dollars for your corporate friends. Why couldn't you find a little bit of money to ensure that northern cancer patients can access cancer care in our communities too?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I know the Minister of Northern Development and Mines has some information to share with this House.

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I am pleased to address in response. As members opposite know full well, this government has made major steps forward toward bringing better care to patients in northern Ontario. In fact, these efforts have produced 116 new specialists coming into northern Ontario.

A major initiative is the Soo cancer centre, a new initiative in northern Ontario; a new hospital in Thunder Bay, among others; and new pilot projects in northern Ontario in the telemedicine area. The Telehealth program has been such a success in northern Ontario that we're going to expand it to the rest of the province. It began in the north and we're learning from success in the north to address better care and primary care for patients in northern Ontario.

Speaking of Mr Lougheed, I have a note here from him addressed to Premier Harris in which he writes on the bottom, "Your government is doing an excellent job re regional cancer delivery programs."

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Education. You will recall that last month you appointed an investigator to go into the Windsor public board of education to determine why they were coming up with a \$6-million deficit. You know now that they have submitted that report to you, and what he said to you was, "I found things to be in excellent shape."

Minister, yesterday's budget provides no new money for the Windsor public board to deal with their deficit.

Could you explain to us today exactly what your plans are for the Windsor public board that has experienced a \$6-million deficit?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): Only a Liberal could think \$400 million net new dollars to education for this coming school year is not going to have a benefit to all the different school boards.

First of all, we sent an investigator into that board to investigate why they were proposing to break the law. When that report has been reviewed, we will certainly be discussing what we will be doing with the recommendations from the investigator.

Mrs Pupatello: Minister, you sent an investigator in because they have a \$6-million deficit because of your funding formula.

Today in this House, the students from W.D. Lowe are here. They're right behind your head; they're right upstairs. You remember meeting with students of W.D. Lowe because their high school is closing. You sat down around the table and looked at them eye to eye while they explained personally what they have been dealing with because of your funding formula.

Yesterday's budget has \$130 million less for elementary and secondary school students, and you know it, so don't come forward with numbers in the House today. I am asking you specifically. Your investigator said: "I found things to be in excellent shape." What are you proposing to do for the Windsor public board, which is running a tight ship and whose students are here today and want to hear what you have to say to them about helping our Windsor public board?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, perhaps the honourable member might have done these students the courtesy of telling them that today was not the day that any announcements or decisions were going to be made about Windsor. It might have been a courtesy to tell them that before you get them all excited about something and drag them down to Queen's Park and make them part of a media photo op.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Secondly, every community values its schools. That was the same when we had one-room schools around this province; they value their schools very much.

Mrs Pupatello: "I found things to be in excellent shape."

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, take a seat. Stop the clock.

The member for Windsor West, I've warned you before. I'm sorry. I'm going to have to name you and ask you to leave. You can't shout across. You were warned before. I know you've got some folks here, but unfortunately, when I give you a last warning, I have to stick to it if you shout across. I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

Mrs Pupatello left the chamber.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate that the honourable member cares about her community, like every community cares about their schools. It's never an easy

decision for school boards when they have to live within their budgets. That's not new. They've had to do that before and they will always have to do that. It's a very difficult decision for trustees to make.

But what this government is also doing is we are putting \$459 million in new dollars into education—yet again, more money into education—so that all boards can continue to benefit from increased funding and so that we can do an even better job of giving what I know parents want, teachers want and students want, the best-quality education that we can possibly give them.

1450

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, as you know, the mining industry is a major factor in Ontario's prosperity. The strength of the mining sector is particularly important to the economic viability of northern regions of Ontario where so many communities have a rich mining history. I want to tell you that in Perth-Middlesex there is a lot of open-pit aggregate mining as well.

Can you explain for the Legislature what effect yesterday's announcement to cut the mining tax will have on northern mining communities?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): As the member from Perth-Middlesex remembers, in our Voice for the North policy document in the run-up to the previous campaign in 1995, we committed that we wouldn't touch mining taxes and fees until the budget was balanced and that we'd then look to lowering taxes in the mining sector once we had achieved that. A promise made, a promise kept once again.

Yesterday we announced a 50% reduction in the mining tax, which is the lowest tax rate now in all of Canada, towards our goal of making sure that Ontario is the safest and most attractive jurisdiction in which to invest for mineral investment. Again, a promise made, a promise kept.

Mr Johnson: You're right, Minister; our government has proven that tax cuts create jobs. I'm reminded that only four and a half years ago the chant from across the way was: "Where are the jobs? Where are the jobs?" And today here we are, 700,000 more than in 1995.

Aside from cutting the Ontario mining tax rate, what other initiatives did yesterday's budget announce to help the mining sector and assist mining communities to reach their full potential?

Hon Mr Hudak: There is no doubt that yesterday's budget was worth its weight in gold for the mining industry. Not only did we slash the mining tax by 50%, we have a tax-free holiday now of 10 years for new remote mines in the province, a 50% further cut in the mining tax beyond that, and a focused flow-through share program made for Ontario to encourage grassroots exploration and development in northern Ontario—a proposal, I may add, that was brought to the federal

government on repeated occasions and that keeps getting rejected by the federal Liberal government. I'm going to call on members from northern Ontario on all sides of the House to support the federal government in moving to match what Ontario is doing to promote mining and exploration and prospecting in the province.

I want to read one quote from the Ontario Mining Association. Patrick Reid, the president, says: "When this government came into office it made a commitment to reduce taxes which impact the mining industry once the budget was balanced. These measures prove that the government was true to its word in honouring that commitment to the mining industry." Promise made, promise kept.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development. Northern Ontario mayors met with the Minister of Health this morning to ask for support for a new medical school in northern Ontario. They came in under the impression that your government had made a commitment to adding new medical school spaces in yesterday's budget, and it's no wonder they had the impression. I'll remind you what the Minister of Finance said yesterday. He said, "I'm announcing today that we will implement Dr Robert McKendry's recommendations to increase the number of spaces for medical students." The budget paper says there is \$11 million to increase the number of spaces for medical students.

Today we learned there are no new medical school spaces. The \$11 million is for last year's announcement of 12 more spaces for foreign-trained doctors and to expand retraining programs for doctors already in practice. There is not a single dollar in this budget for a single new space for a new medical school student.

Minister, this shortage of doctors is one of the most serious issues facing northern Ontario communities. Why would your government not only ignore the need but insult us by trying to trick us?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I mentioned earlier—I guess the member wasn't listening—the steps this government has taken to address the issue of physician undersupply, a long-standing issue that quite frankly the parties opposite, the Liberals and the NDP, did not address in their time in office. This government has brought 115 new specialists to northern Ontario. In the member's own riding of Thunder Bay there's a new state-of-the-art hospital. In Sudbury there's a major reinvestment in health care. The Telehealth initiative is bringing better primary care to northern Ontario. And yes, we have the McKendry report. An expert panel is considering what Dr McKendry has recommended, to investigate what the best and the brightest minds in the province have to say to advance what we're already done for the industry, which is far more than they even thought of doing when they were in government.

Mrs McLeod: I have an article from today's Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal. It says, "Hudak Lists the Benefits for the Northwest." It says here that there will be \$11 million to increase enrolment in Ontario medical schools. There is not a single penny to increase enrolment in medical schools. It says here that there will be free tuition for medical students who plan to practise in northern Ontario. Minister, you know very well that this is for medical school students who plan to practise in any of 100 underserviced communities right across this province. You can support at best 100 students a year with that program. That's one per community, and that will not solve the problem.

The worst insult for northerners was that you could not find, in a budget with at least \$4 billion worth of tax cuts, even a few million dollars to improve the northern health travel grant. I listened when you answered earlier, Minister. You basically said northern cancer patients could be helped with a teleconference. You can't cure cancer with a telephone call.

Northerners, when it comes to health care, have been insulted, they've been ignored and they have been lied to. Couldn't you at least find a few dollars for the northern health travel grant?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would ask the member to withdraw the word "lied."

Mrs McLeod: I withdraw the term, but my question stands.

Hon Mr Hudak: I would suggest to the member opposite, who happened to lead her party for I guess a few months and then was—it led to a tragic defeat, I guess, for that party. Maybe the anger should be directed at herself. Where were you as the sitting Liberal government, where were you as the leader of your party that let this province flounder, that did nothing for underserviced areas in Ontario? Coming from Thunder Bay—a new hospital is coming there. Why weren't you out there for the new hospital? Why weren't you advocating for that when you were in government? It took Mike Harris and the Conservative Party to build that new hospital in Thunder Bay, to bring a new cancer centre to Sault Ste Marie, to make these major steps that—

The Speaker: Minister take his seat. New question.

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Tourism. Although there have been some very positive gains made in Ontario in terms of the number of visitors coming to our province and in terms of the revenues their business has generated, I understand there are also some signs that there could be a slowdown in the coming years.

The tourism industry provides many job opportunities in my community and is a high-growth economic sector. Clearly it is critical that this government take steps now to address this problem so as to avoid Ontario losing tourism revenues in the future. Can the Minister of

Tourism inform this House what he is doing to address this issue?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism): I'd like to thank the member for his question because we do face a challenge in this province. Globally, tourism is going up. The amount of tourism in the global economy is actually going to triple over the next 10 years, and as such, Ontario has to get its fair share. In fact, we've not been doing as well as our neighbour Quebec, which has had about a 4% increase. We've only had about a 1% increase. That's why our government has responded with a four-year, \$120-million commitment to marketing our great province and why yesterday's budget included an additional \$50 million over the next four years so that we can stay competitive in this growing industry.

We support about 500,000 tourism-related jobs in this province. We know we can produce more jobs as a result of it. I also want to thank the Treasurer for the \$300-million fund for the SuperBuild sports, culture and tourism partnership that my colleague and I look forward to investing in growing jobs in Ontario.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I regret that I couldn't get to my question but that is not my point of order. My niece Virginia Roberts who just graduated with a BSc from Dalhousie University is visiting me and she is in the gallery today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I also am sorry that, with her being here, she didn't get to her question, but unfortunately we did not. We welcome her. It's not a point of order, though.

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas essential public services have been deprived of government funding because the Conservative government of Mike Harris has diverted these funds to self-serving propaganda in the form of pamphlets delivered to homes, newspaper advertisements and radio and TV commercials;

"Whereas the Harris government advertising blitz is a blatant abuse of public office and a shameful waste of taxpayers' dollars;

"Whereas the Harris Conservatives ran on a platform of eliminating what it referred to as 'government waste and unnecessary expenditures,' while it squanders over \$100 million on clearly partisan advertising;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative government and Mike Harris to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with sentiments of this petition.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

1500

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads like this:

"Whereas Ontarians with a developmental disability are in growing danger of inadequate support because compensation to staff of not-for-profit agencies is, based on a recent survey, on average, 20% to 25% less than compensation for others doing the same work in provincial institutions or similar work in their settings; and

"Whereas there are hundreds of senior parents in Ontario who saved the Ontario government millions of dollars by keeping their child with a developmental disability at home, and who are still caring for their adult child;

"Whereas there is no place for most of these adults with a developmental disability to go when the parents are no longer able to provide care;

"Whereas these parents live with constant anxiety and despair;

"Whereas these adult children will end up in Ontario's nursing homes and hospitals if there is no appropriate place to provide care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To significantly increase compensation for workers in not-for-profit agencies so that it is comparable to the compensation of government-funded workers in identical or similar occupations; and

"To provide the resources necessary to give appropriate support to Ontarians with a developmental disability who at present have no place to go when their parents are no longer able to care for them."

I affix my signature. There are thousands who have signed this.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I am pleased to present further petitions collected by Cecil Mackasey and Rick Roberts of CAW Local 222 and forwarded to me by Buzz Hargrove, president of the CAW Canada.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances known as carcinogens; and

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to carcinogens; and

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances; and

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer and that the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

On behalf of my NDP colleagues I add my name to those of the petitioners.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of constituents in the riding of Durham, and that list would include Ruth Hinkley, Troy Young and others. I'll read it to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the province of Ontario exempted Highway 407 east from a public hearing and then passed the Highway 407 Act to further exempt the proposed highway extension from important provincial environmental laws, such as the Ontario Water Resources Act, the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act and the fill regulations of the Conservation Authorities Act; and

"Whereas heavy equipment is now being used to clear the eastern path of the highway, without any environmental guidelines, control or monitoring;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario, as a matter of extreme urgency, to put in place such environmental monitoring procedures and controls as are necessary to prevent extreme degradation such as bulldozers working in stream beds, and numerous other environmentally destructive acts that have been witnessed since the 407 east extension was permitted to go ahead."

I am pleased to present the petition and affix my signature to it.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I have the signatures of 230 very frustrated, getting angrier and angrier, constituents, and I will affix my signature in full agreement with their frustration.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I am pleased to affix my name to it.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition that I'm pleased to present on behalf of the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North, and I am in complete agreement with the petition. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

It is signed by approximately 100 individuals and I am in complete agreement with this petition as it, in effect, bans discrimination in this province.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Respectfully I read this petition for the pleasure of the members here and on behalf of my constituents.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the prayer, Our Father, also called the Lord's Prayer, has always been used to open the proceedings of municipal chambers and the Ontario Legislative Assembly since the beginning of Upper Canada under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe in the 18th century; and

"Whereas such use of the Lord's Prayer is part of Ontario's long-standing heritage and a tradition that continues to play a significant role in contemporary Ontario life;

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is a most meaningful expression of the religious convictions of many Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario maintain the use of the Lord's Prayer in its proceedings, in accordance with its long-standing established custom, and do all in its power to maintain the use of this prayer in municipal chambers in the province of Ontario."

I'm pleased to support and sign this petition, respectfully, in the province of Ontario.

1510

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): "To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians with a developmental disability are in growing danger of inadequate support because compensation to staff of not-for-profit agencies is, based on a recent survey, on average, 20% to 25% less than compensation for doing the same work in provincial institutions or similar work in other settings;

"Whereas there are hundreds of senior parents in Ontario who saved the Ontario government millions of dollars by keeping their child with a developmental disability at home, and who are still caring for their adult child; and

"Whereas there is no place for most of these adults with a developmental disability to go when the parents are no longer able to provide care;

"Whereas these parents live with constant anxiety and despair;

"Whereas these adult children will end up in Ontario nursing homes and hospitals if there is no appropriate place to provide care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To significantly increase compensation for workers in not-for-profit agencies so it is comparable to the compensation of government-funded workers in identical or similar occupations; and

"To provide the resources necessary to give appropriate support to Ontarians with a developmental disability who at present have no place to go when their parents are no longer able to care for them."

With great pride, I take my pen with five seconds left and add my name to this fine petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further petitions? The Chair recognizes the member for Halton.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Thank you, Mr Speaker, especially after that very slow one you heard before.

I have a petition to the Legislation Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I'm pleased to add my name to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2000 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 2, 2000, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): It gives me great pleasure to present to you on behalf of our party, the official opposition, our response to the government's budget. I want to do this by doing three things in particular.

First, I want to tell you where we stand, where our party stands. I'm going to spell out what we believe needs to be done to secure lasting prosperity that all Ontarians can share in.

Second, I'm going to assess yesterday's budget, because I believe that it clearly failed to use today's wealth to secure tomorrow's prosperity.

Finally, through you, I'm going to invite the public to take a hard look at the government's real economic record and what it means for our province over the long term. I'm going to use that phrase repeatedly today, "the long-term sustainable prosperity," making sure that our children can enjoy all the kinds of opportunities they're going to need. I'll make countless references to those things because we believe they're so very important to our economic future.

To begin, we believe in an approach to our economy and our finances that will keep our province competitive over the long term. That means improving front-line health care, boosting higher education and delivering tax fairness. It's high time we had what I call 24-7 health care here in Ontario. That means access to the best medical advice and care 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Under that kind of system, family doctors would work in teams with nurses, nurse practitioners and other health care professionals, so that someone from their health care team would be available around the clock.

The other day my daughter, who is now 18, turned to me and said: "Bankers' hours? What does that mean?" I said: "You know, that's a quaint phrase. It comes from a time long ago when banks were open between the hours of 10 and 3. If you wanted to do banking that day, you had to get there between the hours of 10 and 3." She found this very strange because she can bank 24 hours a day, on-line or by telephone. I also have three sons who like to order pizza. When they order their pizza 24 hours a day, seven days a week, they make a call and the person at the other end knows their phone number, their address and their history when it comes to what they like on their pizza.

The point I'm making is that if we can get that kind of service for things that are as unimportant as ordering a pizza, and in many ways as unimportant as banking, then surely we should be able to transform our 1960s-style health care system into one that's much better suited to meet our 21st century needs. That's what 24-7 health

care is all about. That's why we've been pushing for it so strongly. We think it's absolutely essential to modernize health care in Ontario because I am personally convinced—and I hope government members understand the gravity of the situation—that if we don't modernize our health care, we are going to lose our health care.

We also believe that with all of this money rolling in—the finance minister tells us we've taken in \$5 billion more in revenue than had been originally anticipated—with us riding the back of the American wave south of the border, surely we should have been able to find some money to invest in higher education. In the new knowledge-based economy, the best-educated workforce attracts the best jobs and the best jobs earn the most money, which makes the greatest contribution to our economy. That's what it's all about. Investing in our colleges and universities is not only the right thing to do for our young people, it's the best possible thing we might do for our economy.

I want to make reference to a paper which I strongly recommend all members of this Legislature take the time to read. It's about 30 pages in length and it's written by Michael Porter, who heads up the business school at Harvard, and his counterpart here at the University of Toronto, Roger Martin. This was a document that was prepared somewhat like a report card on how well our economy here in Canada is faring. These two senior economists tell us some things which I believe are very important, and there's every reason to believe, based on the contents of this document, that the members of the government are not familiar with it. I just want to take the time to read a couple of passages because they are very important.

On page 26 of this document entitled *Canadian Competitiveness: Nine Years After the Crossroads*. It says, "Investments in education, training and specialized skills upgrading have among the highest payoff of any investment government can make in improving the micro-economic environment for business."

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What they're telling us is that there is a direct link between investment in higher education, investment in our young people and our continuing ability to prosper.

They also say, "It is interesting to note that seven of the top 10 countries on the innovation index"—and I might tell you that an innovation index measures a nation's ability to produce and exploit innovation over time; basically it tells you how competitive you are—"increased their spending on higher education over the 1975 to 1995 period, while Canada and two others did not. On average, the former seven increased their GDP per capita by 50% over that same period and the latter three by only 33%."

Again, there is a direct relationship between investing in higher education and general economic prosperity. That's what this government, unfortunately, doesn't get.

Finally, with respect to taxes, we believe it is essential that we deliver lower taxes, yes, but we must also deliver fair taxes. What that means to us is that it's essential to

target most of our tax relief at those people who need it the most—our middle-class families and our working poor. When we share the wealth with the people who produce and consume the products and services, we help ensure lasting prosperity.

That's what Liberals stand for: modernizing our health care, boosting higher education and targeting tax cuts to the middle class and working poor to ensure lasting prosperity.

Just so the government members, who are obviously failing to understand the importance of this, really get it, I want to speak to the issue of tax fairness for a moment. We can't sustain prosperity, and I don't want to live in a province, to be perfectly frank, where we're leaving so many people behind. Homelessness in Ontario is up. Child poverty is up. Poverty, generally speaking, is up. Mike Harris has managed to do something which is in many ways unprecedented in the annals of economic history. He has managed to uncouple growth in GDP from the general advancement of our population. He's not making sure that we all move forward together.

I can tell you that what that means at the end of the day is that our choice here in Ontario is between protection and protectionism. Let me tell you what I mean by that. It means protecting our people from the worst aspects of globalization because if we don't, they are going to turn against globalization. They're going to say: "I want the trade walls back up because we can't find our place in this brave new world. We're not finding success in this new economy, so I'm against globalization." And you know what? We can't turn the clock back on that.

But our responsibility here is to make sure that everybody finds success in this new economy, and that's not happening in Mike Harris's Ontario. If we don't protect our people, look out for their interests and make sure that they can find opportunity, make sure they get quality health care, make sure they can all afford to go on to quality public universities, if we don't do those things, then they're going to demand it. Protectionism. They're going to demand that we turn the clock back on globalization. They're going to demand that we put up trade walls again. That would not be a good thing.

Let's take a look at yesterday's budget. At the outset, as might be expected, I looked at many of the newscasts and saw a lot of the print reportage and many of the headlines are titillated with this notion of a \$200 tax cut to be delivered to each and every taxpayer in the comfort of their own home.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Copied from the US.

Mr McGuinty: It's interesting that this is nothing new. As my colleague says, this has been used in the United States. Jesse Ventura in Minnesota, Tom Ridge in Pennsylvania, among other Republican-style governors, have used this notion and it just strikes me as being so American. Do you know what I mean by that? I mean it has such an individualist appeal.

We're saying to Ontarians, "Look, here's \$200 for each of you." When you add up all those cheques, do you

know what you get? You get \$1 billion. Do you know what we could do with \$1 billion here in Ontario? We could make sure that there's room for our kids in universities. We could make sure that we've got quality health care. Why is it that this government is so intent on separating us and driving us apart when historically our real strengths in this province have always been when we have pulled together.

I can tell you I am absolutely convinced that if you were to knock on Ontario doors and say to people: "Listen, Mike Harris is sending you a \$200 cheque. Do you want a \$200 cheque or do you want quality public education at the university level for your children and your grandchildren? Do you want a \$200 cheque or do you want quality health care there for yourself and your children and your grandchildren? Do you want a \$200 cheque or do you want us to begin to invest in a responsible way in public transit so that we can not only rid ourselves of gridlock but we can do much more to protect the quality of air that our children are breathing? Do you want a \$200 cheque or do you not feel sense of responsibility to help those people who will be sleeping on the streets of Ontario tonight," if we were to put the case to Ontarians in that reasoned, intelligent, caring and compassionate way, they would respond the Ontario way. They would say, "I am for doing those things that help ensure that we all move forward together."

The budget that was delivered yesterday fails to use today's wealth to secure tomorrow's prosperity. Despite all the rhetoric about brighter futures, the budget fails the future. One of the members opposite says, "Spend, spend, spend." Well, you know, we've got \$5 billion in additional revenues that this government did not originally anticipate having and they are spending like crazy. They're spending \$4 billion on corporate tax cuts. They're spending \$650 million on tax cuts for those people who play the stock markets. So let's not give people the wrong impression here. These people are spending. The problem is they're spending in the wrong kind of way. They're not spending in a way that's going to assure us all of a bright future.

The money is rolling in. God bless the United States of America. I think it is time that we all give credit where credit is due. It's important that we give credit where credit is due. It's time that we paid tribute to the founder of our economic fortunes and I want to do that today. Thank you, Alan Greenspan, chairman of the US Federal Reserve Board.

The real issue here is what are we doing with our economic good fortune? Surely that's the real issue, right? The problem with this government is that they are squandering this fortune. They are missing an opportunity to shore up our future success. They may think it's somewhat humorous, but I can tell you it is completely out of keeping with our traditions in Ontario, which have always dictated that we collectively share responsibility for those people who are coming behind us. I'm not ashamed to say that. I'm not ashamed to say that fundamentally is the reason I got into politics in the first

place: to make sure that all of those benefits, all of those successes that I was fortunate enough to be able to encounter in life we can work together and make sure are available for our children and our grandchildren.

1530

The fact of the matter is, this budget fails to improve front-line health care, it is neglecting higher education and it does not deliver on tax fairness.

How can a budget that talks about brighter futures neglect the things that we need to ensure lasting prosperity? It talks about higher education, but the fact is this government's own numbers show that it's actually spending \$200 million less on the operating costs for our universities and colleges than they did five years ago. How can a budget that talks about brighter futures fail front-line health care? It talks about an increase in spending, but the money is spread so thinly there is no evidence whatsoever that it's going to have any real impact on improving care here in Ontario.

We hear talk now that apparently we're going to have 80% of our family doctors enrolled in primary care reform. Well, I will believe it when I see it. Something this government fails to understand is that if we really want to move forward on 24-7 health care in Ontario, you can't just talk to doctors; you need nurse practitioners, you need nurses, you need other health care professionals and you need consumer advocates. I can tell you that the process that is in place now, where we have doctors who are locked behind closed doors together with government officials charting a course for the future of medicare in Ontario, is one that is not going to deliver at the end of the day. I won't believe that this government is genuinely committed to 24-7 health care until I see in place a process that involves nurse practitioners and nurses and other health care professionals and consumer representatives. Until that process is in place, it tells me they are not really committed; they are more prepared to simply talk in the abstract about it.

They don't even make any pretence, as far as I'm concerned, about tax fairness in this budget. There is a \$4-billion tax break for corporations. I'm all for lowering business taxes, but surely some of that money could have been devoted to health care reform and higher education and helping our homeless and investments in public transit—in our other areas that are so important for Ontarians to be able to move forward together. There's a \$650-million break for those wealthy enough to speculate on the stock market, but there is very little for our struggling middle class, who are only managing to tread water, and our working poor, who are falling more and more behind.

Let me tell you something about this race to reduce corporate income taxes. It's a race that's taking place not only here in North America but throughout many parts of the world. It's a race we can't win. Mike Harris is telling us that in six years' time our corporate income tax rates here will be lower than our North American counterparts. I can tell you that the governors south of us have today learned about the details of this budget and they'll be

making commitments very shortly to beat us when it comes to reducing their rates of corporate income taxes. We can't win on that score. What the experts are telling us is that if we want to find continuing success in this new economy, we are not going to find it in imitation, we're not going to find it in replication. We are going to find it in innovation. Innovation is harder, it presents a greater challenge, but at the end of the day they should understand that it is more rewarding. That's the foundation for a strong economy in this new economy. It's not imitation. It's not a race to the bottom.

I have had the opportunity to visit some cities south of the border recently, and I can tell you that there is something there I really like. There is a sense of entrepreneurialism in the air that is almost electric; you can almost touch it. And those are good things. We should do what we can to see how we might instill that in our people up here. It's a competitive world. We want Ontarians to embrace all of the opportunities and we want them to bring to it an entrepreneurial zeal and zest.

Having said that, do you know what I don't like, and this is why I'm not inspired by American tax regimes? I don't like the fact that they've got the highest rate of child poverty in the developed world: 25%. I don't like the fact that there are 44 million American citizens who will go to sleep tonight without any health care coverage of any kind, including 11 million under the age of 12. I don't like the fact, and this is something that is near and dear to the government's heart, that 40% of Americans keep a gun at home because they fear for their own safety and security. I don't like those aspects of what is happening with our neighbours to the south. That's why I am not prepared to have their tax regime as an ideal that inspires our efforts. I think we can do something better. It's called innovation.

This budget fails to modernize health care, it fails to improve higher education and it fails to make our taxes fairer as well as lower.

Speaker, I want to invite you as well as government members, who are now listening attentively, to look beyond this morning's headlines at the government's real record. In some ways we are living through one of the most exciting times in our history in this province. We are living through a revolution, an economic, social and technology revolution, and it's presenting all kinds of opportunities. We're able to ride the American slipstream and capitalize on all the expansion that has been taking place. That's wonderful.

Let's take a real close look at what's happening here in Ontario. We know that our middle class families are working longer and harder than ever before, but they are not getting ahead. Their real incomes are not increasing. They are working longer and harder but their real incomes are not increasing, and I can tell you why. One of the problems they're facing, of course, is that they are facing increased costs for private health care. This government—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. I can't have this talking back and forth. If you feel it necessary, please remove yourself from the House so I don't have to do it for you. I want to have the attention of the House on the person who has the floor. In this case, it's the Leader of the Opposition and I recognize him.

Mr McGuinty: Thank you for your intervention, Speaker. If only they all had the same sense of appreciation for my words as you do.

Laughter.

Mr McGuinty: What are you laughing at?

Not only is our middle class struggling just to stay in place, but our working poor are falling further and further behind. Child poverty is up 118% since 1989. Food bank usage is up 258%. Among our homeless population, the fastest-growing group is mothers and children. How can this possibly be happening in this time of economic expansion? We're living through a boom. How is it possible that we are leaving so many people behind? More pointedly, how is it possible that when we had \$5 billion in additional dollars, if we have \$4 billion in tax cuts for our corporations and \$650 million over here for those who like to play the stocks, if all of that is happening, if that's our economic context, how can we possibly be leaving so many Ontarians behind? Poverty is up during an economic boom.

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You know what else? Our debt is up. This government has added \$24 billion to the province's debt since it was first elected. It did that by borrowing for tax cuts before the budget was balanced. That's one of the reasons we have been so critical of this government's previous tax cuts. They went to international markets and borrowed at prime-plus to deliver premature tax cuts. In total, we're talking about an additional \$10 billion in debt which we are saddling our children with. Now, I don't claim to be prescient, I don't claim to be able to see into the future, but I can say with absolute certainty that our children will never, ever thank Mike Harris for giving this government and this government's friends a \$10-billion tax cut which was borrowed at international markets at prime-plus. They will never thank them for doing that.

It seems to me that if we're going to enjoy lasting prosperity, if you want to secure our future, one of the things we should be doing is making every effort not to add to the debt. This government has added \$24 billion to the debt. They like to lay claim to a monopoly on fiscal responsibility, but the facts belie that.

What we should be doing when it comes to the future is making sure that our kids and their grandchildren have as much fiscal freedom as possible, but what this government has done by adding \$24 billion to the debt has tied their hands for years and years and years to come. They are going to be obligated now to make debt and interest payments on the \$24 billion that they've added to the provincial debt.

Let me tell you, again on the matter of the debt, that the debt has now grown here in Ontario to \$114 billion. That's a triple-digit billion-dollar debt: \$114 billion.

That's the first triple-digit debt in Ontario's history. That is their real and lasting claim to fame. That's a wonderful legacy for our children.

Now the budget is finally balanced, but let's put this, as well, in some context. In the race to balance budgets in Canada, take a look at the 10 provinces that were in this race and the one federal government. Where do you think Ontario placed? Didn't get the gold. Didn't get the silver. Didn't get the bronze. Didn't come fourth. Didn't come fifth. Didn't come sixth. Didn't come seventh. Didn't come eighth. Didn't come ninth. We came 10th. Hooray; we came 10th. When the last competitor comes into the stadium and it's dark at night and there's hardly anybody left in the stands, and they've got the lights out and they're packing up, I guess the nice thing to do is to congratulate this second-to-last competitor.

As they crow about the fact that they've balanced the budget, let's put this into some real perspective. We could have balanced the budget two or three years ago, but the government insisted on adding to the deficit by borrowing for a premature tax cut.

These premature tax cuts have hurt us in other ways. If you look at all of the provinces and all of the American states, we finish 59th out of 60 jurisdictions when it comes to boosting investment in our universities. Quebec and Ontario are the only jurisdictions that have cut their investment in universities. Every other jurisdiction has increased investment, because they know that the best-educated workforce attracts the best jobs. We understand. To use the common parlance, we get it. They don't get it. We get it. If you want to ensure that we can all enjoy lasting prosperity, not only do you invest in the next generation because it's the right thing to do, you invest in the next generation because it's a virtual guarantee of sustained economic prosperity.

If you take a look at what's happening among all of the provinces here in Canada, we rank second-last in investment per student in our universities. When it comes to charging the highest tuition, we rank second from the top, second only to Nova Scotia. Think about this for a minute here. We've got 60 jurisdictions in North America and we are right near the bottom. This adult generation is right near the bottom in terms of the amount that we're prepared to invest in the next generation. On the other hand, we are right near the top when it comes to the amount that we are prepared to charge the youngest generation and their families to go on to university. That's where we find ourselves today. You know what this government's response is? Incredible as it seems, this government says that the solution to that echo generation which is marching through our primary and secondary schools and will shortly be knocking on university doors is, "We're throwing the doors open to private universities." Private universities.

I ask government members to ask themselves, had that been the approach taken by previous generations of governments, how many of us here would have been able to afford to go on to university? How many of us here would be enjoying the quality of life that we are so

fortunate to be able to enjoy today in Ontario if the previous generations took that approach to us? So I say it again, Speaker, and I say this looking at the eight pages sitting at your feet, don't we have a responsibility to keep the doors open for them? I don't care where they come from. I don't care how long they've been here or who they're connected to or how wealthy their parents are. Don't we share a collective responsibility to keep the doors to affordable public universities open to them and their generation? Instead of turning our public universities around, this government is turning its back on our public universities. That's what they're really doing.

They've also turned their back on the modernization of medicare. This government would prefer to fight over health care and use taxpayer dollars to do that rather than work together to fight for health care. We believe we should be fighting for our health care. We believe that medicare is at risk. Let me tell you what our take is on medicare. It has to be the single most eloquent and elegant metaphor for Canada. It says everything about us. It says everything about our values. We're talking about the way that we treat our sick and our most vulnerable. It says everything about who we are, but most important, it says everything about what we aspire to be. It surely is the most noble and honourable ideal that has ever evolved here in Canada. That is something that informs our thinking, it inspires our efforts and we will never, ever set aside our responsibility to fight for quality medicare here in Ontario. And on top of that, it's not simply a matter of values, although that, in and of itself, is more than enough. Medicare happens to give us a distinct, competitive advantage.

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What we've decided to do in this province is that instead of our going to our insurance companies on an individual basis and seeking insurance coverage, or instead of a few dozen of us getting together and saying, "You want to reduce costs; we'll go together," we've decided in this country that 30 million of us are going together, that 30 million of us are going to move forward on this and that we're going to ensure we have in place a health care system providing universal coverage.

What that happens to do as a side benefit, and it's a wonderful benefit in this competitive global economy, is it gives our businesses a real edge. We can roll a car off the assembly line here in Ontario—remember, the auto sector is still the foundation of our economy, as my colleagues from Windsor remind me on an ongoing basis—for close to \$1,500 less than they can south of the border. Do you know why that is? It's because of medicare, because of public health care.

There was a study done. It is the definitive study on this matter. It was done in March 1999 by the Conference Board of Canada. For the first time, it compared apples to apples. They compared businesses with both Canadian and American operations. They confirmed that in every instance we enjoyed a tremendous advantage as the result of our public health care, our medicare system.

I'm not sure if Ontarians recognize and realize, and I'm not sure if government members understand, that today in Canada no group of people pays more for private health care, no group of people spends more on private health care than Ontarians do. Ontario families are paying a lot more today for private health care. Ontario's businesses are paying a lot more today for private health care. That's not only reducing our competitive edge, it is a stealthy erosion of our commitment to medicare. That's one of the reasons it's so important for us to modernize medicare. We think it's time to put the brakes on that development. We think it's time to become re-inspired by the medicare ideal.

If the Premier had simply followed the lead of his pal Premier Ralph Klein he could've balanced the budget first and then given out tax cuts. He even could've started paying down the debt. While he was at it, he could've used some of the surplus to invest in health care and education. Then we'd be sitting pretty in the year 2000 with the best of all possible worlds: a balanced budget for the last two years, a shrinking debt, modernized health care, superb higher education and tax relief that really helps middle class and working poor families.

But that's not what he did. To drive the matter home, we in the Ontario Liberal Party have a decidedly different approach, one that will ensure lasting prosperity, one that will make our province competitive over the long term, lasting prosperity that all Ontarians can share in. That's what Ontario Liberals believe in. That's what we here on this side of the House are fighting for. That's what we stand for. We ask all Ontarians to share those beliefs, join that fight and stand with us.

I have a motion. I want to move the following amendment:

I move that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on May 2, "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government," be amended by deleting the words following the words "That this House" and adding thereto the following:

Recognizing that the budgetary policy put forward by the Minister of Finance fails to use today's wealth to secure tomorrow's prosperity, condemns the government for:

Spending \$200 million less on the operating budgets for our universities and colleges than it did five years ago when higher education is the key to better jobs and a better future for Ontarians;

We condemn the government for funding our high schools and schools less by breaking its commitment to offset revenue lost to education property tax cuts;

We condemn the government for failing to modernize front-line health care and demonstrating, as the government's own health reform panel said, that it has no vision for our health care system;

We condemn this government for spreading any new health care spending so thinly that there is no evidence any aspect of care will improve;

We condemn this government for claiming it is investing in primary care reform when its deal with the Ontario

Medical Association will put that reform off for another decade;

We condemn this government for cutting the Ministry of the Environment budget another 9%, for a total cut of 40%, when Ontario already has the second-worst environmental record in North America;

We condemn this government for failing to deliver tax fairness by giving a \$4-billion tax break to corporations, and a \$650-million break for those wealthy enough to play the stock market, but offering little or no tax breaks to struggling middle class and working-poor families;

We condemn this government for spending much more on prisons than on affordable housing when homelessness in our province is increasing;

We condemn this government for doing nothing to reduce poverty, which is increasing even as our economy booms;

We condemn this government for refusing to assist and for abdicating any responsibility it has for public transportation;

We condemn this government for failing to balance the budget until after the federal government and every other provincial government but the NDP in BC; and

We condemn this government for adding \$24 billion to Ontario's debt, creating the first 12-digit debt ever in Ontario, a further burden to future generations of Ontarians;

I say, therefore, this government has lost the confidence of this House and this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr McGuinty moves that the motion—

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): Dispense.

Interjection: No.

The Deputy Speaker:—moved by the Minister of Finance on May 2, "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government," be amended by deleting the words following the words "That this House" and adding thereto the following:

Recognizing that the budgetary policy put forward by the Minister of Finance fails to use today's wealth to secure tomorrow's prosperity, condemns the government for:

Spending \$200 million less on operating universities and colleges than it did five years ago when higher education is the key to better jobs and a better future for Ontarians;

Funding our high schools and schools less by breaking its commitment to offset revenue lost to education property tax cuts;

Failing to modernize front-line health care and demonstrating, as the government's own health reform panel said, that it has no vision for our health care system;

Spreading any new health care spending so thinly that there is no evidence any aspect of care will improve;

Claiming it is investing in primary care reform when its deal with the Ontario Medical Association will put that reform off for another decade;

Cutting the Ministry of the Environment budget by another 9%, for a total cut of 40%, when Ontario already has the second-worst environmental record in North America;

Failing to deliver tax fairness by giving a \$4-billion tax break to corporations and a \$650-million break for those wealthy enough to play the stock market, but offering little to struggling middle-class and working-poor families;

Spending much more on prisons than on affordable housing when homelessness is increasing;

Doing nothing to reduce poverty, increasing even as the economy booms;

Condemning Ontarians to traffic gridlock by abdicating any responsibility for public transportation;

Failing to balance the budget until after the federal government and every other provincial government but the NDP in BC;

Adding \$24 billion to Ontario's debt, creating the first 12-digit debt ever in Ontario, a further burden to future generations of Ontarians;

Therefore, this government has lost the confidence of this House.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): As is the tradition, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1603 to 1633.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr Klees has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour of that motion will please stand and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

All those opposed will please stand and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 64; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

This House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1634.

ERRATA

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51A	Contents	2	28	FIRST READINGS Taxpayer Dividend Act, 2000, Bill 72, <i>Mr Eves</i> Agreed to 2610
51A	Table des matières	2	41	PREMIÈRE LECTURE Loi de 2000 sur le versement d'un dividende aux contribuables, projet de loi 72, <i>M. Eves</i> Adoptée 2610

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

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Gilles Bisson, Sean G. Conway, Alvin Curling,
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First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 4 May 2000

Jeudi 4 mai 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 4 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 4 mai 2000

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR L'OBLIGATION DE RENDRE DES COMPTES EN MATIÈRE DE JUSTICE

Ms Mushinski moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to make Ontario judges more accountable and to provide for recommendations from the Legislative Assembly for appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada / *Projet de loi 66, Loi visant à accroître l'obligation de rendre des comptes des juges de l'Ontario et prévoyant que l'Assemblée législative fasse des recommandations de nominations à la Cour suprême du Canada.*

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I move second reading of Bill 66.

I would first like to thank the members for Cambridge, Etobicoke North, Guelph-Wellington and Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, who will also be speaking on this bill this morning.

It is my pleasure today to rise in the House to ask my colleagues on both sides of the House for their support for my private member's bill, the Judicial Accountability Act. There is no question that issues of crime and justice are important to the people of Ontario. North or south, urban or rural, Conservative or Liberal, crime concerns all of our constituents. Throughout the first term of this government, and now in the second, improving safety in our communities has been a priority for the Mike Harris government. We have said before that we must ensure that law-abiding Ontarians feel safe in their neighbourhoods, on their streets and in their own homes.

Our government has taken many steps and introduced many new initiatives designed to strengthen our justice system. However, our constituents are still fearful. They still have many concerns with a justice system that they feel is failing to protect them. My colleagues and I heard the issues during the election, ranging from the Young Offenders Act and the parole system, to a court system that has completely failed law-abiding citizens. I heard it personally at a town hall meeting less than a month ago: Our courts are too lenient. No one in the room disagreed.

Our law enforcement officers have been vocal critics of a soft court system. Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino has been actively pursuing the concepts of truth in sentencing and of placing policy-making powers back in the hands of elected representatives.

When I was reading the newspaper yesterday, I came across yet another illustration of what Chief Fantino has been talking about. Sam Calladine was convicted of manslaughter in the stabbing death of his wife. He was sentenced to 13 years in prison. Despite the fact that he had previous assault charges, jail escapes and weapons offence charges, Calladine's sentence was reduced to 10 years on appeal. Despite his criminal history and the fact that he took the life of another human being, he was released on parole after serving two thirds of his sentence. Since his release earlier this year, he has already fled a halfway house, stolen a pickup truck and two rifles and is on the run from authorities. This is the type of preventable crime from which we expect our justice system to protect us. When the court system fails to protect the interests of victims and law-abiding citizens, the public loses faith.

Our court system has not only failed to use stiff sentencing as a tool for protecting law-abiding citizens and punishing criminals, it has also created an environment that makes it difficult for our police officers to perform their duties effectively. Supreme Court decisions have thrown obstacle after obstacle in front of our hard-working law enforcement agencies. The most minor violation of court-created criminal rights can result in a guilty person walking away from drug trafficking, sexual assault or even murder without having to face justice.

An inspector with a police division here in Toronto recently shared this anecdote with me to illustrate the absurdity of some of these court decisions. Officers were responding to a "shots fired" report. When they arrived on the scene, they began searching the street. Very near the shooting site, they found a car on the street. Through the car window the officers could see the handle of a semi-automatic handgun sitting on the back seat of the car. It took officers over six hours to follow the court-created procedures necessary to obtain a search warrant for the vehicle.

Stories like this have created public distrust in the court system. There is a widespread feeling that courts are no longer a place for justice. Instead, their purpose is to ensure that the rights of criminals are protected above all else.

The Judicial Accountability Act begins to address some of these concerns. Bill 66 will create a public

registry of sentences handed down in serious criminal cases. This is not unlike existing sunshine laws such as the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. The registry will encompass each criminal case that goes to trial for a crime that carries a maximum sentence of five years or more in prison. The registry will be detailed with the name of the judge, the maximum sentence for the crime, the actual sentence the judge handed out and any reasons the judge gave for handing out a sentence less than the maximum. Cases that have been plea bargained will be exempt from the registry, because judges have little if any influence over the length of sentence handed out in many of those cases. It would be unfair to hold judges accountable for those sentences. In addition, a provision has been included in the bill to allow judges to explain why they gave out a sentence less than the maximum. This acknowledges the fact that the circumstances of each case are different and therefore the sentences will be different.

The bill also allows the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recommend the appointment of future Supreme Court justices. Hopefully, this will force Jean Chrétien to abandon his policy of appointing interventionist judges. The values of the Supreme Court must reflect those of average Canadians.

The bill will provide us with empirical evidence in the debate over sentencing. Instead of speculation, we will once and for all be able to know whether sentences in Ontario are too lenient. The information gathered in the registry would be available in the future should the people of Ontario demand that their government introduce performance reviews for judges. In some instances, the registry will result in public pressure being placed on judges. Public pressure has already proven successful in certain cases. The newspapers attribute to public outcry the refusal of a judge to grant Karla Homolka prison passes. I was pleased to have played a small role in that with my petition on behalf of Scarborough residents. However, judges who sentence reasonably and responsibly need not worry. They can continue their practices.

This bill has received a great deal of attention. Of course, organizations representing defence attorneys are vehemently opposed to any legislation that could result in longer sentences for criminals. However, the overwhelming majority of attention has been positive. I have had countless constituents contact my office to express their support for the bill and their appreciation for my efforts.

Law enforcement agencies and officials are delighted. Edie Newton, executive director of Against Drunk Driving, had this to say: "The Judicial Accountability Act will be very instrumental in gauging how judges weigh criminal cases as serious as impaired drivers. For some time now my colleagues and I have had grave concerns with the apparent disregard for the victims and their families when it comes to punitive sanctions handed down by our provincial court justice system. You may count on our support for a very courageous and timely bill."

In conclusion, our courts are public institutions. They were created by the will of the people to serve the people. Their proceedings are open to the public. Results of those proceedings are public knowledge. It is time to make that information available for the public. I encourage all members to support the Judicial Accountability Act for the protection of law-abiding Ontarians.

1010

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I rise today to speak on this bill on behalf of the official opposition. We do not support this bill. This bill is an abomination. This bill is unprecedented in its attempt to bully the judiciary into rendering judgments in a manner that is not offensive to the neo-conservative ideology of the government of the day. This bill is offensive to our system of parliamentary democracy, although I suspect that this characteristic makes it a virtue in the eyes of its supporters.

In the first century AD, a Byzantine emperor, Justinian I, established what we now refer to as Roman law in the Justinian tradition. Roman law system in the Justinian tradition worked pretty well for civil actions and for ordinary criminal cases, but its downfall came with respect to the judiciary. According to the legal scholar Norman Cantor, the judges' "excessive ambition" was "to climb higher in state or church by making decisions that would please those in authority, eroding the quality of the system." He goes on to say that "the flaw in the Roman law system was the lack of independence of the judiciary, which became very evident when the defendant in a criminal action ... was in disfavour with the government for ideological or other reasons.... A Roman law court could easily become an engine of royal policy."

And so it is here, 2,000 years later in the province of Ontario, or so the supporters of this bill, who seek to turn our courts into the engine of their political revolution, would have it. The Common Sense Revolution would thus produce common-sense judges, as dictated by the emperor from North Bay and rendered by common-sense judges who dare not displease the emperor from North Bay. Those unwilling to bend to the emperor's rule presumably wouldn't advance through the ranks of the judiciary. They would find themselves subject to the scorn of the public and the rants of their political opponents in the Legislature until such time as they too bent to avoid disfavour from the emperor of North Bay.

Hyperbole? I wish it were so. I wish it were. It has long been established in our jurisprudence that our Constitution demands an independent judiciary. Not only must justice be done, but it must be seen to be done. If Ontarians believe that judges are in any way influenced or motivated by what the government is doing, then there's no independent judiciary.

I will be reading letters from the treasurer of the Law Society of Upper Canada, the president of the Canadian Bar Association of Ontario and retired judges and lawyers, and they all say that this bill violates judicial independence. So there is a reasonable apprehension. But we don't even need to get into the abstract debate as to whether there is interference with judicial independence

here, because the very intention of this act is colourable. The member for Scarborough Centre has already blurted out the purpose behind the bill. These are her words: "To motivate lenient judges to give out tougher sentences." Well, that's that. She calls a spade a spade, the emperor has no clothes, the overlord is cheerfully exposed and the judiciary is sought to be an engine of the emperor from North Bay's royal policy. This is contrary to every principle of fundamental justice known to every commonwealth nation, particularly this nation and this province.

Chief Justice Lamer of the Supreme Court of Canada said in the Lippé decision that the principle of judicial independence has traditionally required that the courts be independent of government. This principle is established under two grounds.

First, under the constitutional convention of the separation of powers, each branch of the state must be independent from the others. Don't believe me, believe the Supreme Court of Canada, *Fraser v. Public Service Staff Relations Board*. They said what we all learned in high school and we all know is true. In their words, "There is in Canada a separation of powers among the three branches of government—the Legislature," here, "the executive," the front benches there, "and the judiciary," the courts far away from Queen's Park. "In broad terms," the Supreme Court of Canada said, "the role of judiciary is ... to interpret and apply the law; the role of the Legislature is to decide upon and enunciate policy; the role of the executive is to administer and implement that policy."

So if you don't like the sentences that judges are handing out, you pass legislation which changes the sentences, and the courts interpret those laws. If you cry foul because you say you don't have any jurisdiction to do so, then you presumably, politically, talk to your federal cousins, talk to Tom Long, whom you long to be prime minister, or you run for federal office. With all due respect, there is business in this Legislature which we have jurisdiction over and that we wish to do. But if this is your *raison d'être*, I say to the member of Scarborough and other members who support this bill, I encourage you to run federally. If you want to be the official opposition critic for the Canadian Alliance, then please go and do so. But here in this Legislature, we have provincial laws to pass, not abominations that interfere with the judiciary as this does.

The second ground of constitutional protection is under our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 11(d) of the Charter provides for the right to a fair trial before an independent tribunal. Again, the appearance of judicial independence is as sacrosanct as its operation. Public confidence is critical. They need to know that their judiciary isn't being bullied by anybody, any government, into handing down a decision it would not otherwise hand down. That makes our principle of judicial independence even more "integral and important in our constitutional system," says the Supreme Court of Canada, in *Beauregard*, "than it is in the United King-

dom," from which the constitutional convention I spoke of earlier derived.

Either way, on its face, this bill has an unseemly, despotic connotation to the effect that the province is engaging in explicit or benign interference in the judicial branch.

Interjection.

Mr Bryant: The explicit interference? By their own admission, they're trying to motivate judges. By their own admission, they're trying to pressure judges into handing out longer sentences. That's explicit interference.

Benign interference is where you lump judges together with another branch of the state, and the member for Scarborough Centre admitted as much in her speech. She said that public servants are subject to "performance reviews," therefore judges should be subject to performance reviews. The problem is, public servants are accountable to ministers, who are accountable to this Legislature.

Interjection: Notionally.

Mr Bryant: Notionally. Judges are not democratically accountable, because they are a separate branch of the state.

So, by their own admission, there is both explicit and benign interference, and a more blatant case of interference I cannot imagine.

But we know this already. A similar bill was introduced by the member from Oshawa under the previous administration. It was referred to by then Attorney General Charles Harnick as unconstitutional, and it died on the order paper.

1020

So there's no excuse for the position taken by the Attorney General, the Honourable Mr Flaherty, in this case. He said in the *National Post* and other newspapers on April 20 that "releasing such a list might not" even "require passing a new law, and his staff is looking into ways it could be done under current legislation"—so not only forget about judicial independence but forget about democracy. You don't even need to pass the law. He then said in his words, "I think it addresses a need which people have to get some kind of accurate reading on what sentences are done."

This is an infamous occasion in the history of this critical and sui generis ministry. After all, the Attorney General has special legal and constitutional duties. On his own Web site, the minister says he "has unique responsibilities to the crown, the courts, the Legislature and the executive branch of government. ... the office has a constitutional and traditional responsibility beyond that of a political minister," in his Web site's own words.

He's vested under the Ministry of the Attorney General Act with special responsibilities to safeguard judicial independence. Section 5 of that act says that he must "superintend" the administration of justice, that he must "superintend" the operation of the judiciary. Well, some superintendent, this Attorney General—more like an absentee landlord, although that may give absentee landlords a bad name.

We all know that the Attorney General is in flagrant violation of his duties under the act and under the constitution. He's the one who's supposed to stand up in cabinet and say: "I stand aside from cabinet on this point. This act is in violation of the constitution." Mr Harnick had the courage to do that, and I can assure you that the Honourable Chief Justice of Ontario Mr McMurtry would have done that, Ian Scott would have done that, Ms Boyd would have done that—but Mr Flaherty did not do that.

I will also remind—and it gives me no pleasure to do this. Mr Flaherty has an obligation as a member of the bar, as do all, not to judge-bash, under rule 11 of the rules of professional conduct, and we are walking up to that precipice with this bill. The path you are clearing, Attorney General, is not an honourable path, and I urge you to return to the path, cleared by your predecessors, of wisdom and justice.

Look, don't take my word for it. There's a letter of May 2, 2000, to the Attorney General from the president of the Canadian Bar Association—Ontario: "By requiring judges to forward to the government their reasons to justify why a lower sentence may have been given would seriously erode judicial independence.... We are completely opposed to this proposed legislation. As chief legal officer of the crown, we respectfully ask that you reconsider your support for Bill 66"—Susan McGrath, the president of CBA-O.

The treasurer of the Law Society of Upper Canada also wrote the Attorney General, and it's dated May 3, 2000. If I have time I'll read the whole letter.

"Any suggestion that the Legislative Assembly might provide for some form of review of the judges of the Superior Court of Justice and the Ontario Court of Justice raises the spectre of unwarranted interference with the independence of the judiciary.

"We hope that you and your colleagues on all sides of the Legislature will be able to persuade the sponsor of the bill, Ms Marilyn Mushinski, to withdraw it from the legislative agenda."

It's signed Robert P. Armstrong, QC, treasurer of the law society.

The Ottawa Citizen can hardly be accused of being liberal, with all due respect. An editorial states: "That Ontario Attorney General Jim Flaherty reacted positively to this is shocking. No government should single out certain judges for public pressure tactics."

Retired judge John Osler: "The response of Ontario's Attorney General to some of the latest outbursts has been to state his intention to establish a system for scoring judges with respect to their sentencing practice. The proudest act of the government he supports in recent times has been to make it easier for the police to punish squeegee kids, a proportion of the population so small as to be almost unmeasurable."

David Scott writes to the *Globe and Mail*, "I don't know Ms Mushinski or whence she came, but the identification of the Attorney General of Ontario with this sort of attitude is alarming."

I urge the Attorney General and the members on the other side of this House not to support this bill and head down the path of despotism. It's time to stop blaming everybody, including judges, for what's going on in Ontario. Stop blaming other politicians. Stop blaming those unable to defend themselves, as all the counsel here in this chamber know cannot in public, and start being accountable for your own administration.

Yet even as the emperor from North Bay plays the political game of friends and enemies, mindlessly stealing the pages from Thatcher and Gingrich, it is this attack upon judicial independence that takes this debate out of the realm of ideology and into the realm of despotism. If I overstate that, then this is without a doubt the most unsuitable attempt to interfere with the judiciary ever visited upon this Legislature.

Have you ever seen that statue of Justice? There is one of the goddess of Justice, Justitia, outside the Supreme Court of Canada. The Attorney General would have seen it on the way into the court the other month. The kids may have seen it in Judge Dredd. There is a statue of justice, holding the scales of justice. Can you look in her eyes? No, you can't; she's blindfolded. Justitia cannot see race or creed or colour or class. She's supposed to be blindfolded. This act attempts to rip off the blindfold and expose the judiciary to the glare of public opinion and accountability. I urge all members of this House, as we do, to not support this bill.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): My first response to this was to dismiss it as just a wacky backbench private member's bill. Lord knows private members' business on Thursday mornings has seen its share of good bills, mediocre bills and outright wacky ones. My first response was that this is not going to have any sort of substantial support here. There'll be 15 minutes of Warholian fame for its sponsor and the matter will be over and done with.

But then the Attorney General, Mr Flaherty, endorses this proposition. That moves it beyond just another wacky backbench private member's bill during private members' business on Thursday morning. Then it became something that wasn't just wacky but downright scary. I beg to differ with the comment made earlier that this is unprecedented. I think you'll find this sort of standard, this sort of approach in any number of tinpot dictatorships in Third World countries and totalitarian regimes where there is a direct relationship between the regime in power and their so-called judiciary.

My God, Speaker, we are the envy—have been—of the world for some of the very basic democratic principles that guide the division of powers, that give rise to this observation of the independence of the judiciary. Here we've got a bill that would not just erode but quite frankly directly attack the independence of the judiciary. The motivation is to exploit and carry on this so-called "Get tough on crime." I don't think this government is serious about getting tough on crime.

This government, as has been noted, wants to blame Ottawa. Heck, I'll join them in blaming the feds. I have

no qualms about bashing federal Liberals. I've no qualms about bashing provincial Liberals. I'm in a unique position. As a New Democrat I can criticize both the Conservatives and the Liberals and I do so readily. From time to time I criticize my own party or my own leadership. God bless.

We've got a judiciary in this province, in this country that, I put to you, is acknowledged internationally as being outstanding in terms of its skill and its competence and that is heralded for the clear independence they have from political power, from government, from the state. That's as it should be.

We hear anecdotes from the sponsor of this bill. When did we hear any hard data? We hear her expressing what she says is the concern of, as she will put it, "oh, so many people" about what she calls light sentences. Well, I suppose. I read papers too and I see any number of reports. From time to time I see a sentence and I say, "My goodness, that seems a particularly light sentence." At the same time, I've read the papers and looked at reports of any number of judicial proceedings and I've said, "That's interesting; it seems like a pretty heavy sentence, a pretty heavy hit, a pretty heavy whack" for what I read.

1030

The author of this bill, the sponsor, would want this Legislature to have some sort of supervisory power over judges and their sentences. She doesn't understand. I don't think she understands that judges' decisions are carefully scrutinized by courts of appeal at both the provincial level and at the Supreme Court of Canada up in Ottawa. The federal government has criminal law jurisdiction—I think that's what lawyers would tell you—and the federal government has the power to set the sentencing provisions in the Criminal Code, and they do. So I had to pay some attention to the comments made with respect to this member, the author of this bill, that maybe she should be running for federal Parliament if she wants to write federal law. If she wants to write Criminal Code amendments, maybe she should be running federally. There's a federal election coming up very shortly. I have no doubt about that. I expect then to see her hat thrown into the ring.

The judges I have observed, have watched and know, and I believe they're representative of judges across this province at all levels, are extremely well trained, extremely hard-working—Mr Ouellette, please.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): What?

Mr Kormos: I can read your body language: Yeah, "What?"

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): The member will know that you refer to members in the House by their riding, not by their name.

Mr Kormos: I apologize. The problem is, I can't remember the name of his riding since the Fewer Politicians—

Ms Mushinski: Oshawa.

Mr Kormos: Oshawa. Is that your riding, Mr Ouellette? OK. Mr Ouellette grimaces.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Wait a minute. Mr Ouellette, the member from Oshawa, grimaces when I talk about the judges of this province being hard-working, well trained and extremely competent. I suggest to him then that he should stand in rotation and name some judges who in his opinion are not well trained, not competent or not hard-working. Name some judges, if you're of that view, who don't take their responsibilities extremely seriously and who don't have regard for appellate decisions which guide their sentencing decisions. If Ms Mushinski, the author of this bill—where is Ms Mushinski from?

Mr Bryant: Scarborough Centre.

Mr Kormos: If the member from Scarborough Centre, who sponsors this bill, wants to talk about judges who in her opinion are incompetent or less than hard-working or less than committed or less than professional, then let's hear who they are. Let her report them to the judicial council if she can identify these judges. I beg to differ. I am not aware of judges in this province who meet anything less than the highest standards.

Do I, like any other member of the public when we read the reports and when we observe these things from a distance, agree? Of course not. Am I in possession of all the facts? Similarly, of course not. Do I have confidence in our appellate courts to overturn faulty decisions? Yes, I do. Do I have confidence in our appellate courts to set sentencing guidelines? Yes, I do.

We've seen some of the greatest minds, at our provincial appellate and at the Supreme Court of Canada levels, in terms of appointments. Justice Louise Arbour comes to mind most recently, as a new appointment. I don't think there's a single Canadian who has anything less than the highest regard for her capacity, for her judgment, for her legal acumen, for her skill. I shouldn't start naming names, but I could go on to appellate judges, present as well as past.

The author of this bill wants to talk about rights of victims. We've been trying to talk about them and we've been trying to tell this government that their Victims' Bill of Rights was deemed an absolute failure. This government had its own lawyers in court arguing that their Victims' Bill of Rights didn't provide any rights. Justice Day of the Ontario Court, when called upon to examine the Victims' Bill of Rights—this government was warned when it was passed, was warned during second reading, was warned during third reading, that this Victims' Bill of Rights was but a piece of paper. It took victims to take this government to court trying to seek redress or relief under that Victims' Bill of Rights to establish or prove or demonstrate to this government that their Victims' Bill of Rights amounted to a big zero.

Is there something hypocritical about a government member standing up and bemoaning the lack of rights for victims when this government's own Victims' Bill of Rights doesn't provide any rights and provides no relief or redress for victims, when this government's Victims' Bill of Rights is not worth the paper it's written on?

This bill attacks some very fundamental democratic principles. I suppose I shouldn't be astonished any more

at anything this government does. I suppose I shouldn't be astonished at the disdain this government shows for democracy in terms of what I've seen since 1995 coming from this government in any number of bills and policy directions. This government talks about law and order, but with this bill they're posing a direct attack on the rule of law. They want judges to be subjected to political scrutiny so that politicians can pass judgment on whether judges were doing their jobs properly or not. Clearly the bill is designed to try to intimidate judges. Clearly the bill is designed to erode and attack the independence of judges.

Are any of us pleased when we see an acquittal or a not guilty verdict based, rather than on the facts, as these guys have put it, but on perhaps some sort of technicality? Probably not. But let's understand that the rights the author of this bill condemns are the rights all of us share. I'm damned grateful to be living in a country where we have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, because I enjoy those rights and freedoms as well. Do I have to share them with people who commit crimes? Yes. I have no hesitation in acknowledging that. But is it worth that to ensure that there are some basic and fundamental constitutional rights for every person in this country? You bet your boots it is. We've got people from all over the world risking their lives and any number of things to come here to share in those rights which are part of the very foundation of a democratic society, a democratic country.

1040

I think you've got the message that we're not going to be supporting this bill. I think you've got the message that we're awfully disappointed in a person who holds himself out as Attorney General who would condone this kind of legislation. I've got to tell you that I'm awfully disappointed in anybody in this Legislature who, for instance, may be a lawyer, who would not stand up and defend our judiciary and, more importantly, the independence of the judiciary, and understand, as members of this Legislature, that if you want to change the law, you go to Parliament in Ottawa. You get elected there and you influence changes that will effect changes to the Criminal Code of Canada. That's the way it's done. You don't lean on judges; you don't try to blackmail them; you don't try to coerce them.

I know where some of this stuff comes from. This is oh, so American. This is oh, so George W. Bush in its character and in its quality. That's not the sort of thing Canadians believe in. It's not the sort of thing Ontarians believe in. It doesn't work in the United States. It doesn't create justice there. I'll be damned if we're going to let it come here. We're going to protect the independence of the judiciary in this province and this country.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I'm privileged to speak on this bill today as parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General and provide the position of the Attorney General on two very important legislative initiatives.

I appreciate my colleague the member for Scarborough Centre's interest in obtaining more information about criminal sentences in Ontario. Private members' business is an important part of our legislative process and I look forward to further debate on this matter.

This bill calls for statistical information to be compiled concerning criminal offences for which the maximum punishment is imprisonment for five years or more. This bill requires an annual report to be tabled in the Legislature each year for all cases in which the maximum punishment is five years or more and for which a sentence of less than the maximum is imposed.

Some of this information is already publicly available. It may be possible to achieve the same result without passing a new law. Throughout the legislative process we will be looking seriously at this bill to make this determination.

The Attorney General has had the opportunity to appeal every criminal sentence that may not be appropriate in the public interest. This has been and remains a key accountability mechanism in the criminal justice system.

We cannot underestimate the effect sentencing practices have on Canadian society as whole. That is why the Attorney General recently issued sentencing directives to crown attorneys which emphasize that conditional sentences are not appropriate for serious crimes and crimes of violence or attempted violence. This directive was issued in response to the federal Liberal inaction to amend the Criminal Code so that conditional sentences can never be handed out for serious and violent crimes.

Introduced by the federal Liberals in 1996, conditional sentences permit offenders who would otherwise be imprisoned for up to two years to serve their time in the community. The Supreme Court of Canada found earlier this year that because of the wording of the federal government's addition to the Criminal Code, conditional sentences could not be ruled out even in cases of serious violent offences. As a result of this decision, the Attorney General wrote the federal Minister of Justice almost three months ago urging her to make the necessary changes. To date, there has been no legislative action by the federal Liberal government.

The people of Ontario will not tolerate responding to offenders who should be in jail by allowing them to serve their sentences in the community. Public safety is too important. We believe that the public should be made aware of the type of sentences that are being handed down. Ontario's court system belongs to the public and the people of Ontario have a right to know.

The bill calls for the Legislature to make resolutions to the Governor in Council of Canada, nominating people for appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada. Ontario is responsible for the administration of justice as set out in the Constitution. However, the province has no input in the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court.

Fundamental issues have been raised with the advent of the charter. We believe it is important for the province to have input into who will be making these important

decisions that affect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all Canadians. Consequently, we support this initiative to provide the province of Ontario with meaningful input into the process.

I know the concern that underlines my colleague's bill is also public safety. The legislative process will permit members on both sides of the House to have their input to ensure that the best interests of Ontarians remain at the forefront and public safety is paramount. This bill will benefit from input and refinements, and we look forward to further discussions.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Thank you very much for allowing me to present my views and support the member from Scarborough-Ellesmere in today's debate on judicial accountability.

It is absolutely fascinating and bizarre to listen to the criticisms across the way on this particular bill. If you introduce the concept of change into the courts, automatically the folks across the way go on pilot and construe it as an attack on somebody. Does that suggest then that we're probably dealing here with a group of people who think the status quo is perfectly acceptable? If that's their case, it would be interesting to hear what—some of the judges, provincial or federal, should come and have a look, visit, go with the police, whatever they want to do, and see what is happening in terms of violent crime on our streets.

In my own riding, we just had two murders in the last three weeks. That's nothing to be proud about. But what do we hear from the member for St Paul's? He construes it that if you'd presented an act that would have banned toy guns, we wouldn't have had those murders. If you take the Rock Liberal approach, the gun registry law would have prevented that. So I ask people, why is it that we still have murders in Toronto? We have Statistics Canada reporting that crimes are going down, but in point of fact, if you look at the actual reality, violent crime isn't going down in the city of Toronto, much as the folks across the way want to display a sort of, "Oh, everything is OK," as they have in unreal Ottawa.

I would suggest that these folks across the way, the courts and the clerks, everybody get out into the streets and see for themselves, as some of us have gone to the courts to see what is happening in the way of sentencing, how we deal with violent offenders. Why do you think we've established support for victims who have to be subjected, after 15 years, to the "faint hope" clause? It sure isn't much faint hope for the victims who had members of their families murdered, but over there that's great. What are we into in terms of society? We need a turnaround.

This is not any attack on judicial independence. If separation of powers under the great strict constitutionalist argument presented by the member for St Paul's is so effective, why does he tolerate, accept, as the member for Niagara Centres does, interference in how legislatures across this country deal with social policy issues? We see the Supreme Court always being an activist there. But that seems to be OK, enjoining separation of powers, but

you can't have legislatures ever talking about what happens with the judiciary. Everything is just okey-dokey fine.

I support the member's intent. I think it's a good first step.

1050

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to join in the debate of this private member's bill brought by the member from Scarborough.

I just want to talk about our track record with respect to safe communities. During our first term, our government created strict discipline facilities for young offenders, introduced the Victims' Bill of Rights, provided funding for over 1,000 new police officers, toughened parole standards so that fewer than 50% of applicants are now receiving early release, expanded Ontario's DNA crime lab and increased the number of applications to have criminals declared dangerous offenders.

Since our election in June, our government has—and in my former role as Chair of the justice committee, I was there for the passing of the Sergeant Rick McDonald Memorial Act, which dramatically increased sentences for drivers who flee police officers, the passage of the Safe Streets Act that outlaws aggressive panhandling and other behaviour, and the introduction of Christopher's Law, the first sex offender registry in Canada, and there have been numerous other measures that have been taken.

Let's focus on what the member is trying to accomplish here. The bill will create a registry of sentences handed out for serious crimes. It will list the judge's name, sentence given, maximum sentence and any reason the judge gave for handing out a sentence less than the maximum. This will give the public, law enforcement agencies and politicians better access to information. The bill also allows the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make recommendations on Supreme Court appointments through resolution of the House. This is important. The courts are public, so we should not be denied access to the information. A registry of sentences will help us determine whether our court system is sentencing leniently or whether it is merely a perception created by the media. This transparency is needed.

I do not understand why the opposition parties are not in favour of this. They're basically just paying lip service. They're really not getting at the substance of this. Quite frankly, you've got to question whether they're in favour of safe communities and trying to make sure our public is protected and victims are given fair treatment.

The federal government refuses to get tough on crime. They will not act on a number of measures. There's the faint hope clause that lets criminals out after serving only 15 years of a life sentence. In the past 20 years, over 25 convicted killers have reoffended while out on parole. They have not acted on the discount law that allows criminals to receive parole after serving only two thirds of their sentence. They will not act on Corrections Canada's plans to release 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets every year. They will not act on the

Young Offenders Act. Changes to the Young Offenders Act still do not recognize crimes like aggravated assault, sexual assault and drug trafficking in the definition of serious crimes.

I support the member's intent. I know that what she's trying to accomplish here is to bring transparency and accountability to the public with respect to the crimes she's dealing with, so I support it.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to rise this morning to speak in support of this bill, and I'll read the title again: An Act to make Ontario judges more accountable and to provide for recommendations from the Legislative Assembly for appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada.

I found it interesting to listen to the comments of the opposition across the way, who are essentially attacking this bill as somehow interfering in the judicial process. My riding of Guelph-Wellington is, for the most part, a very safe and very lovely community. We're not plagued, as some of my colleagues are here in Toronto and surrounds, with crimes of great import, and murders are not headlines frequently in our newspaper. As a consequence, I don't get a lot of letters in my constituency office or calls from constituents specifically concerned about crime and safety issues. What I have received, though, is a great number of letters from time to time, usually in response to certain newspaper articles or certain actions in other jurisdictions, where constituents are concerned about sentencing.

The thrust of this bill is very clear. It's essentially contained in subsection 1(2), "The local registrar or clerk of a court shall keep a record with respect to all sentences imposed at the court when," and it goes on to give the details of sentencing. This is about keeping a record.

In my riding, the constituents I represent want fairness. They want separation between political roles and judiciary roles. They're very clear about that. What they do want is fairness in sentencing and they want accountability. What I hear from my constituents is that there is a concern, there is an uneasiness that the sentences given out by judges for very serious crimes are in fact not appropriate.

I, like so many others, share their concerns. What I see this bill doing is making a very clear opportunity for a record to be kept, to be reviewed. I think that in so doing we will have an opportunity, as legislators, as citizens, as law enforcement officers, to see if there is a problem. And if there is a problem with sentencing, if their sentences are too light, if they are uneven, if it happens to be one particular judge or another, we will then be very clearly aware of that and appropriate steps can be taken.

This bill before us today is very clear. It's about getting information on which further decisions or opportunities could be made for change. I am proud to stand in this House and say that this is a bill that my constituents, for the most part, would support because they do want to have confidence in their judges, they want to have confidence in the justice system, and right now, quite honestly, that confidence is disturbed.

I would like to compliment my colleague from Scarborough Centre, Ms Mushinski, who has brought this bill forward. It is a bill worthy of consideration for this House. I will be very pleased to speak and to vote in favour of this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Two-minute reply, the member for Scarborough Centre.

Ms Mushinski: The debate certainly has been very spirited this morning. I want to firstly of all thank my colleagues for their words of support.

I would say to the member for St Paul's, who I know is a lawyer and a very eloquent defender of the judicial system, that my bill really deals with the defence of truth in sentencing. It was interesting, I heard a 10-minute speech on the defence of that judicial system, but most certainly I didn't hear a lot about the defence of victims.

As for the member for Niagara Centre, who is always very eloquent, he gave me what I considered to be a somewhat patronizing pat on the head about my lack of understanding of the judicial system. But I can assure the member that I have a great understanding of democracy, and my interpretation of democracy is always of the people, by the people, for the people, which is why I'm speaking in defence of my bill today.

Crime is a great concern to all of us. It reaches beyond our duties as politicians. It can and does touch our daily personal lives and the lives of those we care about. I know the Judicial Accountability Act doesn't solve all of the problems of the justice system. As provincial representatives, we don't have direct control over many of the system's major aspects; however, we must do what we can and we must have the courage to be innovative.

Once again, I ask my colleagues on both sides of the House to stand in support of the Judicial Accountability Act. Together we must create a province where law-abiding citizens feel safe in their neighbourhoods, on their streets and in their homes.

TARTAN ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LE TARTAN

Mr Murdoch moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act to adopt an official tartan for Ontario /
Projet de loi 49, Loi visant à adopter un tartan officiel pour l'Ontario.

Applause.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): Thank you for the applause from both sides of the House and I'm sure all sides of the House will certainly support this act.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I will even though I'm a Celt.

Mr Murdoch: Yes, all right. That's good.

I see one of your members over there even has a tartan tie on, which is nice to see today. I don't know whether that's his tartan or not, but maybe we'll find out later.

1100

It's with great pleasure that I open the debate in the House on my private member's bill, Bill 49, An Act to

adopt an official tartan for Ontario. This proposed bill will, if passed, establish an official tartan design or pattern as one of Ontario's provincial symbols, similar to the trillium or the amethyst, which we adopted a few years ago.

Symbols are an important part of our public as well as our private lives. Symbols represent our identity and how we represent ourselves and our values, both now and in history. The tartan is one of those symbols.

Just to give you a bit of history, the tartan is an ancient form of dress used by the Scottish Highlanders. A tartan is made up of repeated patterns of threads. It was, and still is, worn by members of Scottish clans for the purposes of identification of both the clan and the clan's territory.

Tartans were first recorded in history by Julius Caesar in France, where he first observed Celtic tribes. The tartan "kilt" is a play on the word "Celt." While looking like a type of skirt, it is actually a descendant from the early battle garb that was worn by Roman soldiers. I know Mr Palladini will be interested in that.

The tartan can also be worn in the form of a dress, a sash, a scarf or a tie. The tie itself was once just a large bandage that crusaders wore around their necks in the event that they were wounded.

There are also many different forms of tartans. There's a mourning tartan, a hunting tartan, a clan tartan and a district tartan.

This tartan that we hope to adopt for the province is in fact a district tartan. A district tartan is one that identifies a person's residence in a certain district, whether that person is a member of the dominant clan or not. So anyone can adopt a district tartan. This tartan would identify someone as being from the province of Ontario.

There are many unofficial tartans for Ontario and also many tartans worn by groups in this province. The Ontario Provincial Police have their own tartan which they have worn since 1968 for the pipes and drums band. That tartan is a clan tartan. It identifies members of that group. The RCMP have their own clan tartan, as well as do hundreds of families whose ancestral roots can be traced back to Scotland. I personally have my own tartan, which is the MacPherson tartan. The Murdochs were accepted to the MacPherson clan, so we adopted the MacPherson tartan which I have on today.

But some may ask, why does Ontario need to adopt a Scottish symbol to represent the province? How can the tartan, the ultimate Scottish symbol, be relevant in this multicultural province?

The answer to these questions is that an official tartan pays tribute to many of the varied contributions of Canadians of Scottish ancestry to both Ontario and Canada. Scottish leaders have made many significant contributions in history, culture, law and government. As a matter of fact, many communities in Ontario have been named after Scottish leaders, communities such as Fergus, Wallaceburg, Glengarry county and Cambridge, just to name a few.

We have had many leaders of Scottish background in education. The University of Toronto, formerly King's College, was established by a Scot, as was the Agricultural College of Ontario in Guelph, by Sir Fergus.

Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone, was a Scot. Colonel John McCrae, the author of *In Flanders Fields*, was a Scot. Many of our political leaders, including the first Premier of this province, were Scots. It is on the tartan of this first Premier, Sir John Sandfield Macdonald, that this proposed Ontario tartan is based.

I would like to take a minute to tell you about what I propose to be Ontario's official tartan. It will be comprised of four colours: blue, green, white and red. The tartan represents what we love about our great province and it's also a reflection of our history. The tartan reflects the diversity of our province. In the tartan the shades of green represent the forest and agriculture of Ontario. The red represents the First Nations of Ontario. The shades of blue represent the waters of Ontario. The white represents the sky over Ontario.

I have a sample of our tartan. I will pass it around so people can have a look at it. If this is adopted, this would be our official tartan in Ontario. We were pleased to have that sent to us today.

This tartan was designed by Mr James MacNeil of Toronto, in conjunction with the chair of Scottish studies at the University of Guelph. The colours of this proposed tartan truly reflect the spirit of natural harmony of our marvellous history and geography, as a district tartan should. As I explained before, we have clan tartans and district tartans, and this will give anyone in Ontario who is proud of our Scottish heritage, or proud just to be an Ontarian, a tartan to wear.

Ontarians, if this bill is passed, can wear a tartan wherein all colours and stripes combine to create an atmosphere of harmony and prosperity, a tartan designed with a phrase in mind that is well known to Ontarians: "Keep it Beautiful."

In 1991, by way of resolution, I introduced Tartan Day in Ontario. On April 6 of each year we proudly wear our tartan to honour the contributions of Scottish settlers in the province, and I wear it to honour our settlers in Grey and Bruce counties. The resolution was passed unanimously in the Legislature with the support and approval of all three parties. April 6 was chosen, by the way, because it marks the anniversary of the declaration of Scottish independence in Arbroath Abbey in 1320.

I'm sure some of you watched the movie *Braveheart*. That was part of our history and part of our culture. When they make movies they sometimes change a few things, and I understand the movie was mostly made in Ireland, but our Irish settlers also have tartans, and in my area of Bruce-Grey we have many Irish settlers also, as well as the Scottish and the English.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): They need independence too.

Mr Murdoch: They have St Paddy's Day. As one member said, St Patrick's Day is celebrated all over the

world, and I'm proud to wear green on that day also. This year on St Patrick's Day I was in Havana, Cuba. They have independence days down there, but out of the whole crowd there was one little fellow with a green hat on, drinking green beer, in Havana, Cuba.

Mr Kormos: Smoking a green cigar.

Mr Murdoch: He didn't have a green cigar, but he was right from Ireland and he was supporting it and showing the Cubans how to drink green beer. That was a great day we had in Havana.

Mr Kormos: Cerveza.

Mr Murdoch: Cerveza, right.

Mr Kormos: Cuba si, Florida no.

Mr Murdoch: Well, we won't get into that one today, Peter.

The resolution had support of all three parties. An official tartan for Ontario also shared the same support when it was first introduced into this House by my former colleague Lillian Ross in 1997. Her bill went through two readings and the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. Unfortunately, the 36th House finished sitting before third reading. Lillian Ross worked hard on that bill. It went through here and, as I say, it was really unfortunate it didn't come back and wasn't done. So I'm doing this on behalf of Lillian Ross also, because she's not here now. She's from Hamilton. I'm sure she'll be proud to see this bill go through, so I hope all three parties can work with us on that.

During second reading, Mrs Ross's bill had an unusual effect on members of the House. I would like to read a quote for you from the Ottawa Citizen about that day: "What was notable when second reading debate occurred was the tone of this normally testy place." I can't see where they'd get that idea. "Stories got personal. Members tried to explain something of themselves and their parts of the province to colleagues from elsewhere. The search for what they had in common replaced the focus on what divides."

So when this went through last time we had a nice House and hopefully today it will stay that way. Maybe even later on; I'm not sure. I think that is what an official tartan can do for this province. If adopted, the symbol of the tartan could bring us all together in this province. It will bring us a community of interest that we all share as Ontarians.

Passing this bill is simply not enough, however. The tartan does not become official until it is registered with the Lord Lyon King of Arms in Scotland.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Further debate.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I'll be sharing my time with the member for Davenport.

I'd like to congratulate the member for Bruce-Grey for his initiative. I think it's very important that we do what we can to reflect the cultural diversity of this province, and this initiative is most important. My own ancestry is not Scottish. I'm Ukrainian and very proud of my heritage. The member made reference to the tartan I'm wearing today. It's the Bruce tartan. I'm proud to wear

the Bruce tartan, which originated with the Bruce clan in the name of Sir Robert de Brus, a Norman knight who escorted William the Conqueror to England in 1066. The folk legend and hero of Scotland was Robert's son and was entitled Robert, seventh Lord of Annandale and second Earl of Carrick, and was popularly known as Robert the Bruce. Robert the Bruce was born in 1274 and fought to victory in the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 and won the independence of Scotland after a fierce struggle with England in 1328. The Earls of Elgin are descended from the Bruces of Clackmannan.

1110

This past weekend Lord Elgin, the 11th Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, was visiting my riding in Elgin county. I had the opportunity to visit with Lord and Lady Elgin as they celebrated their 41st wedding anniversary here in Canada. It's important to also recognize that the county of Elgin, named after a descendent of Lord Elgin's, has adopted the Bruce tartan as the official tie of the county of Elgin. It was from the county of Elgin that this tie was presented to me.

I also want to recognize the 31st combat engineer regiment, the Elgins. The Bruce tartan is also the official colours of the Elgin regiment. It was great to have Lord Elgin visiting the 31st combat engineers this past week.

I'd like to speak a little bit about some of the Scottish heritage that exists within my own county. In Elgin county, the Scots were known as the Highlanders. Between 1816 and 1818, Scottish settlers came to what was known as the Talbot Settlement. Colonel Thomas Talbot arrived in 1803 on the north shore of Lake Erie and opened up vast tracts of land for settlement, hence the name the Talbot Settlement. The early Scots who arrived, the Highlanders, came to settle in the townships of Aldborough and Dunwich in Elgin county. Some of these early settlers had come directly from Scotland, although many had come from New York state, where they tried to establish themselves but were unsuccessful.

Some of the other early Scottish settlers who arrived in our area came from the Canadian west. They originally had gone to the Red River and had travelled thousands of miles to the Selkirk Settlement only to find that they had been misled and deluded as to the nature of the land and the climate that existed there.

The first settlers arrived in May of 1816. These families, the Gillies, the Forbes and the Haggards, were all Highland Scots. It's interesting to reflect back and look at the hardships of those individuals, those early pioneers who gave us what we have in Ontario today. Their first homes were constructed places of shelter of bark, which were subsequently displaced by log structures with roofs of bark and chinks of clay filling the logs. Firearms were of antiquated type, and what they had in the way of ammunition was very limited. Times were tough, but the Scots persevered and settled, and their families have continued to live on in Elgin county today.

One of these families in particular has a story of great interest, the McKillop family, who arrived in 1816 from Quebec. They came from Scotland and travelled to the

Talbot Settlement along with the McNabb, McKellar and McDougall families. The McKillops, like their neighbours in that area, had been farmers and fishermen in Argyleshire. When Duncan McKillop first settled the land, he owned one cow. In order to survive, he had to go to work and find a job to help pay for the needs of the family. His wife, Mrs McKillop, also had to find a job, for which she was paid \$1 a week and given a cow as a bonus at the end of her winter's labour. By the next season, the hard-working pair was able to raise enough corn, potatoes and oats to ease their needs, but it took several years before their farm was able to supply a good supply of wheat. These were not only difficult harvest times but the settlement suffered from disease, which killed and crippled many of the early settlers.

Scottish settlers had brought blankets, clothing and utensils with them. Otherwise, though, they were very poor in these early times. Money was scarce, and it was difficult to sell anything but labour. Only a great deal of spirit and co-operation helped make them successful in these early times. In this respect, the Scottish had few equals.

As I said earlier, I think we need to be proud of the heritage and the contributions that individuals have made to our country. One of the individuals I'd like to speak of today is a gentleman who is renowned across the United States and across the world. He had a distinguished career as a Harvard professor, an ambassador and a public servant. That individual is John Kenneth Galbraith. John Kenneth Galbraith was born in my riding, outside the village of Iona Station. After Professor Galbraith spent time at the Ontario Agricultural College, he distinguished himself with a remarkable career, a career that we should all be very proud of. I had the opportunity this past February to meet Professor Galbraith at his home in Boston. It was a wonderful day to spend a couple of hours with Professor Galbraith. I had to apologize to the Premier that day because I stood the Premier up on a visit to St Thomas, because I felt it was important to spend that time with Professor Galbraith.

One of the publications Professor Galbraith is well known for is a book he published in 1964. It's known as *The Scotch*. It tells what it was like for him growing up in west Elgin and what the early lives of the Scotch were like. I wanted to read an excerpt from this wonderful publication, a publication that I would recommend anybody read.

"... on the first of July of 1914 or 1915 when I was approaching the age of either six or seven. We had gone to Dutton to celebrate Dominion Day, the Canadian Fourth of July, and to attend the Caledonian games. There had been running and broad-jumping, and throwing of weights for distance and height, and a great deal of sword dancing and piping. Some of the dancing we found tedious but the rest was wholly fascinating. My father, one of the officials of the West Elgin Caledonian Society, had looked very grand in a modified kilt of the McDonald tartan—not many of the clansmen owned a complete kilt so they made do with what they had."

To the member for Bruce-Grey, congratulations on your initiative. You have my full support, sir.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Kormos: I insisted on being the only caucus member to engage in this debate. I wanted all of the 15 minutes. After much arm-twisting, I convinced caucus that none of them could have any time in this debate, that I was going to have all 15 minutes.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): No fights?

Mr Kormos: There were fights. You bet your boots there were fights. There was weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth and pulling of hair. There were people in caucus far more influential than I am, far more powerful than I am, the heavyweights in the caucus, who are close to the centre of power, but I prevailed. It doesn't happen often, but for once I got my way in caucus. It has been many, many years since I've had my way in caucus and it'll be many years before I'll have it again.

I say to Bill Murdoch, the member for Bruce-Grey, up in Owen Sound territory, our man in Havana, as we've discovered—he speaks about the Irish patriot wearing the green on St Patrick's Day in Havana. I trust that we can rely upon the member for Bruce-Grey to wear the tartan in Havana next time he visits there. Especially once you get into March and April, where it starts getting incredibly warm and humid, I suspect it might be a relief.

We're supporting this legislation, as we did the legislation by Mr Murdoch's colleague from the last government. Ms Boyd spoke at length to it. She spoke at length about her own Scottish roots. I don't have any Scottish roots. I'm a Slovak-Canadian. My family is from Slovakia, from a very small peasant village, which is still there and very much like it was 50, 100 years ago—200 years ago. The people are incredible, and I'm incredibly proud of my personal cultural heritage.

1120

But I'm equally proud of the cultural diversity and the ethnic diversity that exist throughout this province. I caution Mr Peters not to dismiss this too readily. I believe there is sufficient blue in this tartan that any Ukrainian could identify with it.

I have no qualms about anything, as we indicated a couple of weeks ago when we spoke to yet another part of our cultural mosaic, the German community. I have no qualms. As a matter of fact, I'm enthusiastic about supporting any initiative which helps to celebrate the cultural history of this province, of this country, and the incredible diversity. While I am not blessed with any personal Scottish lineage, I know that a large number of my constituents are and would applaud the existence of this district tartan—Mr Murdoch, had you had a tie made, I might have worn it today—which entitles anybody from the province of Ontario to wear it.

Having said that, let me tell this Legislature the great concerns I have that I spoke about a couple of weeks ago and that I want to address again, because we have this rich cultural heritage. It's huge and it's a growing diversity. Every time new Canadians come to this country, come to this province, we see that diversity expanding

and growing. One of the means by which so many of those groups of people celebrate and maintain their culture within any given community, like communities in Niagara, like communities across this province, is in their cultural halls—down in Welland, Thorold, Pelham, St Catharines, across Niagara—be it the Casa Dante, be it the Polish hall, be it the Ukrainian hall, be it the Slovak Hall, be it the Hungarian Hall, be it the Club Social for the francophone community, just on and on. These halls have been maintained for decades and generations by members of those ethnic Canadian communities and are true non-profit organizations. They survive on volunteer work. In many of them, the people engaged in that volunteer work are aging and becoming fewer in number.

What happened two years ago, as a result of a policy statement issued by the government, was that these halls were denied their non-profit status across Ontario. What that meant was that they've all been reclassified as commercial for the purposes of tax assessment. We've seen the property taxes of these non-profit halls double and triple to unconscionable levels and, quite frankly, unsustainable levels of property taxation. It isn't a result of a change in legislation; it's a result of an interpretive memo that was sent out by the government to the assessment offices. It's highly discriminatory against these cultural groups. It endangers the survival of their homes, be it the Croatian National Home or any other. These homes are critical to the survival of these communities in a real way and critical to the function of them sharing their unique cultures with people of other cultural backgrounds here in Ontario and across Canada.

I wanted to use this opportunity, as I join in celebrating the Scottish heritage of this province, to ask government members to please join with me—Jim Bradley, from St Catharines, and I have been working quite a bit on this issue, but we need the support of other members because these cultural halls are at risk and those communities are going to suffer and all of us are going to suffer.

So, Mr Murdoch, I'm telling you that I applaud your celebration and the entrenchment of that by way of legislation in the creation of an official tartan, a district tartan for the province of Ontario.

I'm asking you to join with me in persuading your Minister of Finance to readdress the issue, the policy statement that came from the government which has caused assessment offices across this province to reclassify these non-profit cultural halls. Sadly, the memo specifically identifies cultural halls as being exempted from the non-profit status. It says Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs etc, and of course they are. I don't quarrel with the fact that those groups maintain their non-profit status, hence residential assessment. But it's happened across the province.

Why it hasn't impacted as much some other parts of the province as it has in Niagara is because the tax increases have been subjected to the 10-5-5 capping. They really haven't seen the whack yet. What happened in Niagara is that they weren't reclassified until the

threshold for the 10-5-5 capping became effective. They weren't the beneficiaries of the 10-5-5 capping, so they got the whack this year. Trust me, it's going to happen across the province. Again, Polish halls, the Italian community halls, the whole gamut is going to enjoy, if I dare say it that way, these 100%, 200% and 300% increases in property taxes.

We've got to talk to the Minister of Finance and persuade him. It doesn't require legislation. It's an interpretive memo that came from the ministry to assessment offices telling them that cultural halls, even if they're non-profit, are still exempted or removed from the non-profit status—very unfair, very discriminatory, very prejudicial to the well-being of these halls and to the great contribution they make to our communities.

Like I've told the folks down in Niagara, these halls are not just places to celebrate culture. They also serve the community, and if we don't have these volunteer-based, non-profit cultural halls serving the community for people's weddings, for celebrations of all types, and we rely totally on the commercial sector, people are going to get whacked when it comes time for one of your kids to have their wedding reception, any number of things, when you start paying commercial rates instead of the very generous rates that you pay for excellent services at these cultural halls.

I say to you, again on behalf of any number of them—and if I start naming them I'm going to get in trouble because I'm going to omit some, but be it Club Rheingold, be it Club Social, be it the Slovak Hall, be it the Hungarian Hall, be it the Croatia National Home, the Croatia hall, the Polish hall, on and on and on—we've got to move quickly or else these places are simply going to be shut down, boarded up, and we'll have lost a great part.

Here we are. We're trying to say something about recognizing and preserving part of our cultural heritage—and again I support this. The NDP caucus supports this. Of course we do. Ms Boyd supported it enthusiastically when Ms Ross had her bill before the House. But let's put this in the broader picture. I hope, Mr Murdoch, you don't think it's unfair that I use this opportunity to raise that issue, but it's an issue that's a source of a whole lot of anxiety for me, I know for Mr Bradley, and I know for any number of ethnic cultural groups across the province who have seen their property—that's not fair, is it, for these non-profit halls to be classified commercial for the purpose of assessment so that their property taxes double and triple? Is that fair, Mr Murdoch? Of course it isn't. I want you to join me with the same enthusiasm you have for this district Ontario tartan, to join Mr Bradley and me in fighting to keep these ethnic cultural halls alive and vital.

Mr Ruprecht: And me too.

Mr Kormos: Mr Ruprecht's on side too. You bet your boots he is. Mr Ruprecht's going to be speaking in just a few minutes. So folks who are interested, don't change that channel. I know we've got competition. Rosie's on,

or Oprah—Oprah's not on in the morning. I don't know whether she's on in the morning.

Interjection: Regis.

Mr Kormos: Regis is on. Regis and Kathie Lee, I guess, yes.

Mr Ruprecht: This is more exciting, isn't it?

Mr Kormos: We're trying to make it more exciting, Mr Ruprecht, but sometimes we falter. I can just see those people reaching for their clickers now. It's only the prospect of Mr Ruprecht speaking in short order that's keeping people tuned in. You know Mr Ruprecht, don't you, folks?

I want you to join me in saving those cultural halls. I join you and I applaud you. You've a person that's very cleverly, very uniquely—again, I can identify a little bit of Ukrainian in here. I can't find the Slovak in here yet.

I've got to tell you, I'll spend some time reflecting on it. I'll talk to folks. Maybe John and Margaret Hudak down in Welland can help me with the Slovak content, or Bruno Galat and his wife, Gita. I don't know. I'll search for some Slovak content in here and I'll encourage my Hungarian colleagues and my Ukrainian colleagues and my Polish colleagues, all those great people in Niagara, from this diverse background, this incredibly rich background.

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We don't enjoy often enough and celebrate often enough the diversity of our community. I'm not talking about tolerance. I don't accept tolerance as the standard. We shouldn't just be tolerating diversity; we should be celebrating it and sharing it. We should be enjoying the fact that in this democratic country and province, in this free country and province, in a country and province where one hopes things like the independence of the judiciary remain a paramount hallmark or foundation stone for that democracy, we can share and celebrate these diverse things.

I would ask Mr Murdoch, is there a protocol? You had a colleague once who wore outrageous tartan jackets into the House. I suppose, in your response—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Please. You had a former colleague who brightened the place up, who was luminescent when he arrived sporting the tartan, in his jacket. Is a discreet pocket hanky sufficient, or does one have to sort of go all out and let 'er rip and be decked from head to toe in the brightest? Now, I don't know if there are going to be other speakers here. He might—I anticipate he's going to speak because he seems dressed for the occasion, or at least sweated for the occasion—consider how this is a somewhat more sober and less alarming tartan than the one he sports today. At the very least, sir, it's far more conservative than what you happen to be wearing this morning.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I like fiery things.

I'm pleased to speak on Mr Murdoch's bill, the member from Grey-Bruce's bill, An Act to adopt an official tartan for Ontario. As I stand before you I am proud to

wear the Irish Royal Stewart tartan to emphasize the importance of this bill.

Many of us who represent areas in the province with a heritage that is connected to a country or an organization that has a tartan are fiercely proud. In my case, my heritage originates in county Monaghan in Ireland, from whence the Stewarts immigrated to this great province back in 1826. In fact, my six grandkids are the seventh generation to live in this great province.

We will continue to retain that heritage and those traditions. We will continue to remember and honour the traditions of the past, but there comes a time when we must pursue the new. We must establish new traditions that represent Ontario's history, culture and traditions.

Ontario is one of the few provinces in Canada that does not have an official provincial tartan. The Ontario tartan could be worn by all Ontarians, no matter what their heritage may be. I believe it will help all Ontarians come closer together. The selected tartan represents the diversity of our great province. It represents our environment and it represents our aboriginal communities.

An Ontario tartan will contribute to provincial culture and pride. It could be a symbol of a province that has established its importance in a very changing world.

Ontario athletes of all ages, in competitions outside or inside the province, could proudly wear the tartan to identify their province. This tartan will provide distinctive marketing opportunities for tourism. It will contribute to products such as special gifts, souvenirs and keepsakes. It will identify visually our name, the great name of Ontario, globally. The tartan will establish a marketing tool for Ontario that will be known around the world.

I hope that all members of this House will support this new and important initiative.

Mr Ruprecht: I am delighted to join in to support Bill 49, An Act to adopt an official tartan for Ontario as a provincial symbol. Symbols are important in both our public as well as our private lives. Symbols represent our identity and how we understand ourselves and our values. As such, they're not simply a point of reminding us of our past, but they're more dynamic ideas that can inspire our imagination with pride and guide us on how we continue to face the challenges of the present and, indeed, the challenges of the future.

Why a tartan as a symbol for Ontario? A tartan, as we know, is an expression of Scottish culture—a symbol for all Ontarians, when we think about the multicultural nature and context of our culture in our nation and especially here in Ontario. Today I'm wearing this tartan, which was given to me by Mr Murdoch, and the multicultural colours of Ontario. Are they exclusive? No, both the tartan and the multicultural symbols are inclusive. It is those symbols of inclusivity that we're trying to embrace even though we're Conservatives or NDP or, in our case here, Liberals. Yet when we look at the symbols of the tartan, this specific one, and the multicultural items which I'm wearing we know we speak distinctly about inclusivity.

That also means that as politicians we have to look after people who are sick, those who are weak and those who need our help. That is just as important when we are thinking about the tartan today as questions of, who do we include, who do we think about, who do we serve as politicians in Ontario? The whole idea of tartan inclusivity, multicultural inclusivity, is very special and must be looked on, especially today, as a symbol of caring for all of us. I'm delighted to be in support of the official tartan.

Second, and just as important, I also remind you of the great contribution of the symbol of the tartan, of the symbol of the Scottish nation in a way, that Scots have made not just to Ontario and Canada. We know their impact in Nova Scotia when they first settled in the 18th century, in fact in the 17th century, but I also remind you of the great impact they've had right here in Toronto.

While it is true that the co-founder of Toronto came from a German background, it is just as true that the symbols and the very foundation, the very block of the growth of Toronto, comes from the Scottish heritage.

I am reminded—and I will quote from a book called Toronto's Many Faces, which many of you—

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Who is the author of the book?

Mr Ruprecht: The author is Tony Ruprecht; that's me. I thought the members received copies of it. If you didn't receive a copy, please let me know.

Mr Murdoch: I don't have a copy.

Mr Ruprecht: You didn't get a copy? I will certainly provide you with one.

There is a very important chapter in here about the Scottish contribution to Toronto.

"A strong Scottish legacy has shaped Toronto's cultural, religious, political, and economic history. Toronto's oldest church, Little Trinity Church on King Street East, was built in 1842 under the patronage of" none other than "Scotsman John Strachan, the first Anglican bishop of Toronto and founder of King's College. On the lawns of Queen's Park"—right here—"sits a bronze bust of the city's first mayor, Scotsman William Lyon Mackenzie ... along with a statue of George Brown ... founder of the Globe"—the Globe and Mail—"newspaper. And at Queen and Yonge streets a plaque at the former Simpson's building (now The Bay) is a reminder of the achievements of Robert Simpson," for the first high-rise department store.

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"The Scots have been in Toronto," and first of course in Canada, "since 1621, when the Kingdom of Scotland established one of its earliest colonies—New Scotland ... men from Orkney who arrived here in 1720, recruited by the Hudson's Bay Co.

"In the late 1700s, Scottish merchants—many of them United Empire Loyalists—settled in Quebec," and then of course they came to Toronto.

"Scotsman Sir John A. Macdonald was Canada's first Prime Minister, and Toronto's first mayor, William Lyon Mackenzie, began the Colonial Advocate newspaper ...

and led the Rebellion of 1837 against the city's oligarchic government. His grandson, William Lyon Mackenzie King, served as Prime Minister of Canada for 27 years."

Then, of course, we had 80,000 Scots coming here in 1871 to 1901, and 240,000 more arrived before the First World War, followed by another 200,000 after 1919. So now today we have about a half a million Scots living in Ontario. The community's cultural activities in Toronto have centred around the St Andrew's Society, the Caledonia Society and the large number of clan societies connected with a worldwide organization.

These societies are very famous. They bring in people from all over the world. As all of us know, when we turn on our television, sometimes we see the Highland Games and we are proud as Canadians of their contribution to this country, and especially, I'm reminded, the contribution that Scots have made to Toronto.

So I'm delighted to support Bill 49 in the name of Mr Murdoch, MPP from Bruce-Grey. I'm also reminded that we will most likely have unanimous agreement because of the importance of the tartan becoming a symbol of Ontario.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to join in the debate on the private member's bill by the member from Owen Sound, An Act to adopt an official tartan for Ontario.

Obviously what we're doing here today is celebrating Ontario's Scottish heritage. I want to reflect on that somewhat. It was during the reign of the famous High King of Scots, Robert the Bruce, that the Scottish people announced to the world their ancestral identity and national independence in the Declaration of Arbroath.

Since that time, April 6 has been an important date for all Scots. In the 17th century King Charles I passed on his own Scottish heritage to what was to become the royal province of Nova Scotia, especially through its coat of arms. April 6 is a provincial day in Nova Scotia, otherwise known as Tartan Day.

The intent of this bill is to have a tartan for the province of Ontario. Most provinces in Canada have an official tartan in this way, except for the province of Ontario. Ontario has about seven unofficial tartans which have been used over the last 150 years, including the Red Ensign tartan. Bill's proposed private member's law would put an end to this confusing variety and establish one official Ontario tartan for all time.

A similar bill to establish an Ontario tartan was previously debated in the Ontario Legislature, with former Hamilton MPP Lillian Ross leading the charge. At that time I was chairman of the Legislative Assembly committee and I was fortunate enough to be in that role when we debated that in committee. It came out of that committee, but it did not proceed forth from there, obviously.

During that debate members of all three parties stepped forward, many wearing their family tartans, to give their unanimous support for the Ontario tartan. Beside me here today, and who spoke earlier, is the member for Peterborough, Mr Gary Stewart, who is

appropriately dressed for the occasion. I would say as chairman that it was very important for us at that time to have recognized the significance of the bill.

Among the many aspects of Ontario and Canadian life that continue to be heavily influenced by the heritage of the Scots is our monarchy. Let us remember that the Canadian monarchy is an English-Scottish one, formed after the royal union of the two kingdoms under King James VI of Scotland, James I of England. Scottish royal traditions persist to this day in Scotland, where Her Majesty the Queen is referred to as Queen Elizabeth I and is addressed as Her Grace.

Certainly we have our traditions also in this country. As you know, we have an oath of citizenship. Every immigrant must say the pledge aloud as the final step in becoming a Canadian citizen. The oath was created by the government of Pierre Trudeau in 1976 and became a fixture in citizenship courts a year later.

I'll just quote the oath for the record: "I affirm that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, her heirs and successors and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfill my duties as a Canadian citizen." That oath of citizenship, which every immigrant must say and pledge aloud before becoming a Canadian citizen, is part of our Scottish heritage.

I'm very pleased to join the debate today and I look forward to this bill going into committee for debate and back to the House. I commend the member from Owen Sound for his work.

Mr Arnott: I am very pleased to rise this morning and participate in this important debate on Bill 49, An Act to adopt an official tartan for Ontario, standing in the name of Mr Murdoch, the member for Bruce-Grey. I still think of it as Grey-Owen Sound. He was the member for Grey-Owen Sound for almost 10 years.

I also want to pay tribute to my former colleague the member for Hamilton West, Lillian Ross, who brought forward Bill 132 in 1997, which I believe was a similar bill to this which was passed by the House but unfortunately didn't pass into law. It was not ordered for third reading, which was its final status.

I'm very proud to be wearing my kilt in this House today for the very first time. My wife gave me this kilt for a Christmas present this past year. I must say that for a boy from Arthur to walk down Wellesley Street this morning wearing this kilt took some nerve. I elicited quite a number of looks and stares, a few smiles but no whistles, I'm afraid to report. I am very proud as well of my Scottish heritage. My name, Arnott, of course, is a Scottish name. My ancestor Henry Arnott came to Ontario from Crieff, Scotland, around 1880. I've had the privilege to visit Crieff. There's a whole slew of Arnotts still living there. It's quite a thing to visit your ancestral homeland, and it's something I was really pleased to do. We Scots are known for our frugality and our stubbornness, and Bill and I are known for those qualities. The Premier's office knows about that, so we don't have to remind them.

I'm also very privileged to be a resident of the town of Fergus, now the township of Centre Wellington. My family moved to Fergus after redistribution took place. The village of Arthur in my old riding of Wellington was cut out of the riding, so we moved to Fergus. Fergus hosts the annual Highland Games and Scottish Festival, the biggest Highland Games in Ontario, held every year in the month of August. We're very proud of our Scottish heritage there.

This bill will adopt an official tartan for the province of Ontario and bring forward another symbol to the people of Ontario, similar to the amethyst and the trillium, which were adopted a few year ago. The Tartan Act recognizes Scottish heritage in this province and the leaders who brought significant contributions in history, culture, law and government. As a matter of fact, many communities in Ontario have been named after Scottish leaders.

It hasn't been said, but this member has already brought forward a bill to recognize Scottish heritage in Ontario by bringing forward a private member's bill, which was passed into law, designating Tartan Day for April 6. As we know, we have important debates in private members' time, but quite often the bills unfortunately do not pass into law. But this member has had the honour and privilege of bringing forward a bill that was passed into law.

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In the time I have, I want to talk about our Scottish heritage. Just to give you a bit of history, tartans have been an ancient form of dress used by Scottish Highlanders. There are many different forms of tartans. There are mourning tartans, hunting tartans, clan tartans and district tartans. The tartan Mr Murdoch hopes the province will adopt is in fact a district tartan, used to identify a person's residence in a certain district, whether or not that person is a member of a dominant clan. Anyone can adopt a district tartan, and that's what this tartan is.

There are quite a few tartans associated with Ontario, currently as many as eight, and the Ontario Provincial Police have their own tartan, as do the RCMP. If this bill is passed, this tartan does not become an official tartan of the province until it is registered in Scotland, and we certainly hope that will take place.

This tartan consists of four colours—I know it has been passed around—green to represent the forests in the province, blue for the province's water, red to acknowledge the aboriginal communities in Ontario and white for the sky above us, although the sky is blue most days, so I'm not sure what that means.

The tartan is a reflection of the province we live in, and is not based on any particular group or country. If this bill is passed, Ontarians may proudly wear a tartan wherein all colours and stripes combine to create an atmosphere of harmony and prosperity.

In the time I have remaining, I want to talk to some degree about the contribution the member for Bruce-Grey has made in this Legislature. As I said earlier, I have

served with him in this House for almost 10 years. I am now his seatmate, and we're both wearing the same garb today. Bill has been a great friend to me and a terrific member of this House over the 10 years he has served.

Mr Kormos: Outspoken.

Mr Arnott: He's been outspoken. He tells it like it is.

Mr Kormos: Brave.

Mr Arnott: He's been brave. He tells it like it is. We need members who tell it like it is and who have the courage to bring forward the views of their constituents, even if on occasion it varies from the official line our party may hold at any given time.

Bill has fought for the extension of Highway 410, which was recently announced, along with the extension of Highway 10 to four lanes north to Orangeville.

In terms of the OMAFRA offices that were threatened with closure, due to Bill there will be an OMAFRA presence in Walkerton in the future. This office was previously slated for closure, but due to Bill's efforts there will still be a presence, as well as continued OMAFRA presence in Markdale and Owen Sound.

Bill had some problems with Bill 25, a municipal affairs bill, which was brought forward in the Legislature last fall. Bill fought against the provision in the bill that if a petition with 75 residents was submitted to the minister a commission might be ordered, and he received a commitment from the minister that that would be deleted from the legislation as soon as possible. In fact, Bill 62, which is presently before this Legislature, having passed second reading, actually deletes that provision from the Municipal Act, which was a commitment the Minister of Municipal Affairs made to Mr Murdoch.

Bill lobbied for more than \$100,000 for fish and wildlife improvements in his riding last year alone. Due to Bill's lobbying, funding for most fall fairs across the province will probably remain intact. That is something that has certainly benefited my riding, and something on which I have been pleased to support his efforts.

It is my understanding that, largely due to Bill's efforts, a new courthouse is going to be built in Owen Sound. I understand there have been some problems in recent months, but he has brought forward the views of his constituents in a very effective way, and that is now back on track.

We have a tremendous water conservation issue that we have to attend to, and certainly there has been a problem in Grey county. Bill has lobbied the Minister of the Environment to bring in a moratorium on further water-taking permits until further study can be conducted.

So Bill has been very active representing his constituents in this House and has done a superb job. I'm certainly proud to be one of his colleagues in the House and proud to call him a friend. I want to congratulate him on bringing this forward, and I encourage all members of this House to support it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? Mr Murdoch has two minutes for reply.

Mr Murdoch: I want to thank all the members who spoke in favour of this bill. The member for Elgin-Middlesex-London has a Bruce tartan tie on today. I'm sure the people in Bruce will be happy to hear that. As you know, part of my riding now is Bruce. The member for Niagara Centre had some good ideas and some solutions he wants us to look at, and I'm sure he'll send me a memo on what we can do about that. He also mentioned that he would wear a tie if I got him one made of this tartan, which I will do in the future. I will see that he gets a tie made in this tartan.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): You have to give it to him.

Mr Murdoch: I will certainly give it to him. I'll do that here in the House.

The member for Davenport has a multicultural ribbon on his lapel, and that's excellent. Multiculturalism is what this is about and a symbol we need, so I certainly appreciate that.

The member for Peterborough is outstanding today. The former member from Simcoe East, Al McLean, a former Speaker, used to come in here quite dressed up, and maybe Gary is taking his place.

The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has the name Joe Tascona but has Scottish heritage and spoke well of this bill.

I also have to congratulate my friend Ted Arnott, from Waterloo-Wellington, who sits beside me and who talked about different things I have done. I'm certainly proud of those things and will keep fighting in this House to make sure we get fair and equitable treatment for my citizens.

I'd also like to thank my staff—one of whom is still sitting here—Melissa Elder and Tony Ambrogio, who helped me research this and get things ready for me. I certainly appreciate their help.

If everyone can support this, we'll have a tartan in Ontario. Thank you.

JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR L'OBLIGATION DE RENDRE DES COMPTES EN MATIÈRE DE JUSTICE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Mrs Mushinski has moved second reading of Bill 66, An Act to make Ontario judges more accountable and to provide for recommendations from the Legislative Assembly for appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The division will take place after we deal with the next item on the ballot this morning.

TARTAN ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LE TARTAN

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Mr Murdoch has moved second reading of Bill 49, An Act to adopt an official tartan for Ontario.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, the bill is referred to committee of the whole House.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): Mr Speaker, I would like all-party consent to put this bill on the order paper for third reading, as it has already gone through committee. It's exactly the same bill that Lillian Ross had in here, and I'd like to see that happen.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the bill be moved to third reading? Agreed. The bill will be ordered for third reading.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1158 to 1203.

JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR L'OBLIGATION
DE RENDRE DES COMPTES
EN MATIÈRE DE JUSTICE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Ms Mushinski has moved second reading of Bill 66.

All those in favour will please rise.

Ayes

Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Clark, Brad
Elliott, Brenda
Galt, Doug
Hastings, John

Klees, Frank
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
Murdoch, Bill
Mushinski, Marilyn
O'Toole, John

Palladini, Al
Spina, Joseph
Stewart, R. Gary
Tascona, Joseph N.
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wood, Bob

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bryant, Michael
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn

Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Guzzo, Garry J.
Kormos, Peter

McLeod, Lyn
Peters, Steve
Ruprecht, Tony
Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 18; the nays are 12.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, the bill is referred to committee of the whole House.

Ms Mushinski: Mr Speaker, I'd like to move that it be referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy, please.

The Acting Speaker: Shall this bill be referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy?

All those in favour please stand.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing.

A majority of the House being in agreement with the request of the member, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

It being 12 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1207 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

YOUTH ASSISTING YOUTH

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I'm proud to have, in the riding of St Paul's, Youth Assisting Youth. It's a community-based program that matches youth volunteers aged 16 to 24, and up to age 30 for males, in a one-to-one relationship with children who are experiencing social, emotional, behavioural and/or cultural problems. It serves the entire GTA, and they're working on expansion sites in Windsor and Vancouver.

The goal of the organization is to provide for positive role models and peer mentors. Potential problem kids are referred from social agencies, schools and otherwise. Since 1976, Youth Assisting Youth has helped more than 8,900 children and youth. They have a 98% success rate at keeping at-risk children in school and out of trouble with the law.

But 350 kids are on the waiting list for this program and their pre-match program had to be cancelled. Here is a perfect opportunity for this government to not just talk about crime but to also invest in the causes of crime. This is a prevention program that this side of the House and I, in particular, and the Ontario Liberals support. We need to start preventing crime and stop talking about crime. Here's a constructive way for this government to engage in that activity; that is, by supporting and providing appropriate investments in programs such as Youth Assisting Youth.

STRATFORD FESTIVAL

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise in the House today to inform my colleagues that the festival season in Stratford has begun. Yesterday the Stratford Festival opened with its pre-season performances for the 48th year and began with Shakespeare's Hamlet. Hamlet is being played by Paul Gross, the Mountie from the popular TV show Due South. This year's playbill also includes plays such as The Three Musketeers and Fiddler on the Roof.

The Stratford Festival is a cultural icon in Canada, and I'm very proud to have the festival in my riding of Perth-Middlesex. I'm also pleased to be a member of a government that recognizes and understands the significant role the festival plays in terms of our culture and our economy. According to a report by the Conference Board of Canada, the festival in 1999 created 6,000 jobs, gen-

erated \$64 million in taxes for the government and had an industry output of \$350 million.

I want to thank my colleague the Minister of Finance who recently announced that the Avon Theatre, which is part of the Stratford Festival, would receive \$2 million from the SuperBuild Corp to help the theatre with its restoration project.

I look forward to joining many of my colleagues in Stratford for the gala opening on Monday, May 29. I encourage all members of the House to visit Stratford and take part in the festival experience.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): The government has introduced legislation that will amend the Mental Health Act to allow for the mentally ill to be treated through community treatment orders. The problem is, there are not enough resources in the community to provide the treatment and support that's needed, and this week's budget does nothing to change that reality. There is nothing there for mental health. The budget does not give mental health a single mention, even in the background paper devoted to health care.

It's hard to believe that the government could have completed two consultations on mental health, leading to a significant piece of legislation that they want to pass this spring, and yet not put anything in the budget to back up that legislation.

Every person who has knowledge of the needs in mental health, whether a supporter of community treatment orders or not, agrees that there must be more money for community treatment. The government will say they've funded assertive community treatment teams or ACTT teams, and these are a good thing, but Dr Ian Musgrave, the government's own director of the ACTT program, told the minister in April of this year that there would have to be three times the number of ACTT teams in place before community treatment orders could be effective.

The government's only clear direction for mental health is to close six of nine psychiatric hospitals. The minister has said there will be no closure until the community support is in place, but the legislation is coming first, well before the community supports are in place, and the plans for closure are progressing much faster than the funding for community programs.

There's only one place left where the government can get money for community mental health, and that's from the closure of 1,133 psychiatric beds. That's chaos.

CAMPBELLFORD DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR JAZZ ENSEMBLE

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to recognize a group of students from a small rural Ontario high school in my riding who are hoping to play at the Montreal International Jazz Festival later this month. Although it was only formed five years

ago, the Campbellford District High School Senior Jazz Ensemble has won gold and high praise at every festival it has entered in the last three years. They've enjoyed success at the Musicfest Canada national competition, southern Ontario regional festivals, and several others. Because of their highly polished performances, one adjudicator actually begged for an encore performance.

The CDHS jazz ensemble has been featured on numerous radio and television programs, including an appearance on TVOntario last year and again on Studio 2 later this month.

Individual members have been selected to the Musicfest Canada All-Star Jazz Ensemble for the past two years and are well positioned to succeed as music teachers and musicians in the future.

All of this success can be directed to their high school teacher and music program director, Dave Noble. He has made the high school band a cool thing to be part of, and for his efforts he was awarded the 1999 TVOntario Teachers' Award as high school teacher of the year.

For your listening pleasure, they are now completing their second compact disk.

Congratulations to their teacher, Dave Noble, and to the students of the CDHS jazz ensemble.

SHAW HOUSE

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Today in the town of Blue Mountains in Grey county, my mother is celebrating her birthday and watching on TV. Hi, Mom. Happy Birthday.

Last weekend, several mainlanders from my riding joined a dedicated volunteer crew of Toronto Island community residents in the construction of new housing units for senior citizens. New life has been brought to the Shaw House, situated on the Ward's Island lakeshore. Vacant for more than 20 years, the Shaw House was built in the 1930s, and most recently served as the home of the island park superintendent.

Now, with youth project support from the federal government, materials donated by supportive businesses and a huge injection of labour from dedicated volunteers, six independent living units with common areas are taking form. The units will provide housing for seniors who are currently living on the island. Many of these seniors are unable to afford to purchase their lease, or perhaps living alone has become impractical.

Architects Ian Trites and Martin Liefhebber have incorporated exciting environmental features, with new ways of reducing carbon dioxide and serious pollutants into the city atmosphere.

My Community Action Team—Wendy and Dave Ground, Joyce Grigg, Kevin Machida, Roxanne Clarke, Tara Smalley, Andrew Hood, Kevin McGuire, Pam Westoby and I—literally worked in the trenches, mixing and pouring the foundations for the new Shaw House.

I congratulate this ambitious initiative, undertaken by the Toronto Island community. They are a very special part of the Toronto Centre-Rosedale constituency. We

look forward to returning to assist Graham Mudge and his team to help complete the Shaw House project.

CESAR CHAVEZ BLACK EAGLE AWARDS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I'm pleased to advise the House that this evening former Canadian Labour Congress President Bob White will be hosting a dinner, the first annual Cesar Chavez Black Eagle Awards, at the United Steelworkers Hall on Cecil Street here in Toronto. The guest of honour this evening is Richard Chavez—

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: I notice heckling coming from the other benches. That's part and parcel of why we've got to take this government to the Supreme Court of Canada to give the farm workers in Ontario the rights they deserve.

Cesar Chavez, of course, is well known as the leader of the farm workers throughout the United States. His brother, Richard, will be here this evening, as I've already stated. His brother in 1966 gave up the security of his carpentry job and joined his brother, Cesar, as a full-time volunteer with the United Farm Workers, organizing and fighting for farm workers' civil rights.

I was proud to join the UFCW and Stan Rapper from the United Farm Workers earlier this week as they held a news conference on May Day reminding this government of the rights they retroactively took away from the farm workers in Ontario, having already been given those rights by the NDP government a number of years before.

The fight here in Ontario is just as desperate and just as important as the one going on throughout the United States. Tonight is a chance to celebrate those involved in that struggle.

BOWMANVILLE MAPLE FEST

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): This past week we heard Minister Eves announce brighter futures with a balanced budget.

There's more good news. As I walk down the street I see the green leaves are starting to bud on the trees; around here at Queen's Park it's the same. This weekend in Bowmanville we have the Maple Fest, which everyone should plan on attending. It's on May 6, and the downtown will be alive with people and music and, of course, maple syrup.

1340

I would like to congratulate all the members of the festival promotion committee, including Edgar Lucas, Lori Allin, Brian Purdy, Monica Scott, Kevin Anyan, Deanna Knight, Garth Gilpin and Ron Hooper.

This event will include a 16-by-28-foot working model railway, courtesy of the Soper Valley Model Railroad Club, and other displays, including woodworking, birdhouse building, antique dealers and many others.

This year's festival will be a bit different because they're going to introduce jazz on the main street. Differ-

ent groups will be performing throughout the day, including Herb Knox's Dixieland band and Bruce Gorrie's Evidence.

Of course, the Maple Fest wouldn't be complete without maple syrup. Mr and Mrs John Moore, who are local producers of maple syrup, will provide demonstrations of the sugaring off process assisted by many of the churches in the community. The Moores will offer children a treat with free samples of toffee, while Archibald Orchards and Estate Winery will provide treats for the adults with samples of their new award-winning apple wine.

I invite all my colleagues in the House to join me in Bowmanville this weekend for our annual Maple Fest.

COMMUNITY MUSEUMS

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I have received a letter from Minister Johns declaring May 2000 as Museum Month. She writes: "Community museums contribute significantly to Ontario's diverse culture and enviable quality of life. They also attract visitors from across Canada and around the world, giving a major boost to the province's economy and providing employment and volunteer opportunities to many Ontarians."

Great words, but unfortunately the minister and her government, as usual, have contradicted themselves by saying one thing and then doing another. A bright future for museums? Not from this budget.

The Ministry of Culture has been cut yet again, and after struggling with a 40% cut, 27 community museums were removed from the 1999 operating grant program. The museums' level of excellence was not in question and some had even been assured by the Ministry of Culture that their grants would be forthcoming. Yet the minister still pulled the rug from under them.

The Hutchison House Museum in Peterborough, Ontario, is one example of how Minister Johns is slowly but steadily bleeding to death community museums in this province.

Brighter futures for museums? Not under this government. Brighter futures for culture and heritage? The sector has been reduced to an endangered species in this province.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I rise today to recognize a very successful National Mental Health Week, which began on Monday and ends this Sunday, May 7.

Since the 1960s, care for the mentally ill has moved from institutions to the community, and since 1995, our government has successfully continued this trend. In fact, the ratio of government funding for hospital and community mental health care has also changed from a 75-25 split in 1994-95 to a ratio now of 60% hospital and 40% community care.

These changes are possible because of an increase of more than \$150 million in community mental health care services since 1995. These increases include over \$7.3 million in mental health funding for south-central Ontario, which includes my riding. Ontario is now spending \$466 million every year to provide community-based mental health services.

Much of the work on mental health began with Dan Newman's consultations on our mental health strategy and has continued with the recent introduction of Brian's Law, which will help people with serious mental illness who pose a danger to themselves or others to get the help they need.

I am very pleased to say during this National Mental Health Week that Ontario is building the most modern, up-to-date mental health system in the country, a system that will meet the needs of patients and keep our communities safe and healthy.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO POLICE MEMORIAL TO FALLEN OFFICERS

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): This Sunday, May 7, is an important day for the people of Ontario. This is the day we will see the official dedication of the Ontario police memorial to fallen officers. This memorial is another example of our government's ongoing commitment to public safety and to Ontario's police officers. We will be acknowledging our heroes, officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Too often we take for granted the bravery of our men and our women who each day help to keep our communities safe. We forget that at the end of the day these people have families to go home to: parents, spouses, children who rely upon them. When a life is lost in the line of duty, these people are left behind to deal with their grief. Their lives have been changed forever. This memorial will not only serve as a recognition of our fallen officers but will also honour their families. I might add that we expect hundreds of family members to be in attendance on Sunday, as well as many officers, thousands, from across Canada and the northern United States.

When the policing community approached our government about the possibility of a memorial for our fallen officers, we responded positively and quickly. This was the right thing to do. The police and community set up a special memorial committee, and we agreed to invest in this very important tribute. We provided a site adjacent to the Whitney Block where two bronze statues and a wall of honour now stand. That wall contains the names of 200 fallen officers who served in the province of Ontario.

For the past year, these committee members have been working diligently to ensure that Sunday's event will be

special for all the police, family and community members who attend. I would like to thank the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Provincial Police Association, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Senior Officers Association, the Toronto Police Association and the Ontario Police Memorial Foundation for working with our government to make this memorial a reality.

I was in my portfolio as Solicitor General for only a little more than a month when I attended my first police funeral. I say "first" because unfortunately there have been a few since then. It was impossible not to be touched by the anguish expressed by the entire community as they said goodbye to one of their own. That officer was Sergeant Rick McDonald of Sudbury. Since that time, I've worked closely with his family and his fellow officers.

As you know, we have named a bill after Sergeant Rick McDonald, a bill that brings in tougher penalties for criminals who take flight from the police. I will never forget the sense of loss suffered by this family. But I was also struck by their bravery. They have since become advocates for justice. Despite their pain, they're willing to continue to believe and hope for a better future, and they will fight that fight to make things better.

I invite the members here and the general public to participate in the memorial dedication on Sunday at Queen's Park. Let us remember those who have lost their lives in the line of duty. But let us also salute the officers who continue to risk their lives each day to make Ontario one of the safest places to live, work and raise a family.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): It's a great honour for me to stand on behalf of the Liberal Party and our parliamentary caucus in response to the statement by the Solicitor General today and to compliment him on his statement and on the move toward the dedication this Sunday of the Ontario police memorial. Indeed, there are many statues and memorials that adorn this building situated in my own riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale and few hold as much significance as this one that will be dedicated this Sunday.

It's clearly something that is overdue and something that we are very proud to support. I know that many members of our caucus will be there alongside members from all parties at this dedication this Sunday. The recognition that some 200 officers will be named on that memorial gives rise for all of us to think long and hard about where the ultimate sacrifice lies in public service. We all work hard and recognize the phrase "public service is a higher calling." But the ultimate sacrifice is the one that has been made by people who have given their lives in the name of public service. As someone who is relatively young and comes from a post-war generation and time, this occurs less often in our society than it did for some of the older members of the Legislature, and the number 200 is a very strong reminder of the extent to which people who have provided so much important service have fallen in the line of duty. I know that all members will join in hoping that new

additions to this monument are awfully rare—non-existent, we hope. But reality and history point to the fact that the risk is inherent in providing the kind of community service that police do and that the likelihood that others will fall is still there.

1350

I think this Legislature has gone some way—and I compliment the Solicitor General—toward bringing in the tougher penalties that we hope will play some role in making sure that criminals who try to escape from police are appropriately punished, so that the element of risk can be diminished. We're proud to join in support of that legislation, to support the government in that way.

My own riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale is one that I have had the opportunity to speak to the minister about many times, calling and advocating for more officers on the street because of the extraordinary need for policing in the communities I represent. The move toward community policing is something I have had such an extraordinary opportunity to be influenced by. My riding is made up of many neighbourhoods, and on a regular basis in the evening we attend meetings where regular constables providing service in those communities come, relate to the communities and try to make sure the needs of the community are being addressed.

As the son of a trucker—my father owned a trucking company—I spent lots of time on the road. Having attended too many accident sites and scenes in my life, I'm easily reminded of the issue of road safety and deaths related to accidents and the carnage on our highways, and the risks associated with that for our officers.

I would like to repeat that we look forward on Sunday to joining with other members of this Legislature, alongside the families who have made such an extraordinary sacrifice, in recognizing the public service, the highest calling, indeed the ultimate sacrifice in bravery that has been made by these officers. This is long overdue. We're proud to join with the government in recognizing this and, again, in paying tribute to the families who have given so much.

My colleague the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London would like to add some comments.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I want to pay tribute to the initiative that is taking place here. On May 7, 1934, 66 years to the day that this monument is being erected, Colin McGregor, a police officer from my community, was killed in the line of duty. Colin McGregor's name will be appearing there, and his sons Roy from Peterborough and Colin from London will be present. But what hit closer to me is a friend I went to school with in 1991, Scott Rossiter, a police officer in Ingersoll, was killed in the line of duty. I think it's sad that that happened, but I think it's good that this monument is being erected, so that the memory of Scott and those 200 other individuals who have given their lives will be remembered. I know that Scott's mother, Marilyn, and his family will be there too. Again, I commend the government for this initiative.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On behalf of my colleagues in the NDP caucus, let me say to the Solicitor General that this is a most fitting action that is being taken on behalf of police officers. We are pleased to see it happening. On a personal level, as a former Solicitor General myself, let me say to the current Solicitor General that I was struck when he made the statement that he was in his new portfolio as Solicitor General for just a little more than a month when he had to attend his first police funeral, and then the fact that unfortunately he had to attend others. I've been there, and it wasn't that long after I assumed office that I had that fateful phone call also, and I also attended far more funerals—understanding that one is too many. I think what strikes one the most the first time is the sense of grief that exists in the entire police and emergency response community. It really is a sense of a family member lost. I can remember speaking with police chiefs at a time when they had lost an officer, and we had tears in our eyes talking about what it meant to lose an officer in the line of duty who was placing herself or himself in harm's way in order to protect the public.

It wasn't that long ago that I was on my feet commenting on the national day of mourning, April 28, where we mourn or remember all workers who are hurt on the job or die on the job, and police officers are workers. But there's something special that we hold to be true for people who are in the emergency response service on behalf of the people of Ontario because of the fact that they move themselves from being safe to in danger deliberately to protect the public. It means the most to us when it is someone innocent, vulnerable, without whom, the police being absent, we could have another fatality of an innocent citizen.

During my tenure I also attended the opening, if you will, of the peace officers memorial in Ottawa. That was a very fitting tribute to all officers who are involved in keeping the peace, and that includes correctional officers. So when we speak of emergency response personnel, we are talking about police, firefighters, paramedics and correctional officers. All of these individuals commit themselves professionally to a life of protecting the public, in most cases people they don't even know.

I would wrap up, and this is maybe the only time I've ever stood on my feet in response to anything a Harris minister has ever said without slamming you for something. But in this instance that would be entirely inappropriate. I want to clearly join in the tenor that has been offered by not just the minister but also the official opposition in saying that we as citizens, particularly as parliamentarians here, need to continue to do everything we can, yes, by way of laws, but also by way of funding, by ensuring that we're listening to the police officers when they talk to us about the tools they need to do the job and the fact that we continue to push, and I believe we have all parties in agreement on this, toward more and more community policing, because that is indeed the wave of the future. In terms of fallen officers, communities now are feeling almost the same immediate grief

that other officers and chiefs and parliamentarians feel, because more and more police officers are becoming a part of the immediate community, the immediate neighbourhood. When an officer is down, which of course is the most frightening call one can hear over the radio, it touches all of us.

Let me again say that we're very pleased to see this happening. It is most appropriate. On as many issues as we can, I think we ought to work toward all three parties trying to find grounds that we can agree on when it comes to public safety, as opposed to constantly trying to find the issues that we're different on.

1400

ORAL QUESTIONS

COMPUTER VIRUS

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): This afternoon my question is for the Chair of Management Board. At our offices in the Liberal caucus this morning we came in to an array of "ILOVEYOU" e-mails. What was so surprising today, and where we knew there was something wildly wrong, was that the government came in this morning to the same sort of e-mails. What we find now at this hour of the clock is that it's actually a very serious circumstance for business and government. In fact, today the British Parliament has been closed because of this very same virus.

My question for the Management Board Chair is, what is the status now of the plan you've implemented to deal with this virus? In the short term, while today we may have lost a business day for many businesses and for some levels of government, in the long term we may well have shaken some confidence in the Internet, in e-mail, e-commerce trading. Could you suggest what moves you've taken today to address this very serious problem?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): As the member of the opposition mentioned, this is a very serious issue. We are aware that this is an international problem, and the early assessments indicate that this problem is isolated to the e-mail systems and has not affected the government's critical computer systems.

Specifically, we have implemented a number of measures through the information and information technology strategy. For example, for the first time we have a co-ordinated approach to protecting our systems that are in place. All ministries are required to implement security measures, and a set of security tools has been provided to help ministries analyze and protect their systems. We use state-of-the-art anti-virus software and firewall protections.

As soon as our government was aware of the virus, we took immediate steps to rectify the problem. The e-mail connection between the government and the outside systems was terminated immediately. The IT technical staff began purging all the e-mail systems that were

infected and staff are also working with the government's anti-virus software vendors to begin downloading the appropriate patch, which is how these problems are solved internationally. I would also like in my supplementary to thank the media.

Mrs Pupatello: We know there's software available to detect that there was in fact a virus. What all of government was struggling with today, even at 1 o'clock, was how to stop it and clean it. So my concern is that while today we see it has affected the Pentagon, yesterday right across the continent of Asia—it shut down banking institutions in Hong Kong—this becomes very serious. In terms of us having confidence in our system—and we believe that the Internet and e-mail are the way of the future, that e-commerce is the way—the public has to view the government as being in charge. We'd like to see, if there is an emergency plan in place, that you could table it so we, in this kind of issue, can work together to see that it's a plan to stop it at its initiation so it doesn't go through the whole day, as has happened today.

I'd like to ask the minister, if there is a plan, would he table that plan so that we can work co-operatively to see that it's at absolutely the cutting edge of technology?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I can assure you that this government takes the security of our systems very seriously. We have set up a central information and information technology office to try to coordinate a government-wide approach to all IT investments and implementations. Right now, though, as you know, moving from the old system to this new set-up, ministries themselves are responsible for their IT and we coordinate it through the IT sector under Management Board.

We are committed to implementing policies and operational initiatives that address the IT security. As I mentioned, some things have already been implemented in our policies and procedures. We are helping program managers to devise ways to protect against threats, and we're also monitoring what's going on around the world so that we can be part of the solution on how to make sure that e-commerce and the Internet are there to serve the needs of the people of Ontario as we move more and more transactions on to the Web.

Mrs Pupatello: To the Chair of Management Board, you lead me to final question, and that is, exactly what kind of monitoring is happening here with the Ontario government? This particular virus started yesterday, so when we woke up this morning, had monitoring been done, had an emergency plan been in place, then this morning the virus wouldn't have affected all of our systems. We knew it was sweeping the Asian continent yesterday and that the banking institutions yesterday were being affected; that having started in a small town somewhere in the Philippines, with such rapid movement across the world, it was going to arrive here this morning. In fact, what happened this morning is that in government offices on both sides of the House, in all of our ministry offices, we all woke up to turn our computers on to find the "ILOVEYOU" bug waiting for us to open our computers and have the virus affect us. So a plan was not

enacted that actually prevented what may well have been preventable.

So I ask you again, Minister, in an issue that could well have been an emergency, before the next virus comes along that could potentially affect our hospital plans, our 911 system and our planes flying, we'd like to know there is an emergency plan in place and that it's absolutely at the cutting edge of what we expect. We knew about the virus yesterday, and in such an instance that plan could have been implemented this morning for prevention and not after the fact, once it had arrived here. Could we have a look at the plan, and are you prepared to work with us to improve that plan?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I think that is a good suggestion. But I reiterate that we are aware this is an international problem, and the early assessments we have done of our systems indicate it is isolated to e-mail systems and has not affected the government's critical computer systems. We have technical people right now working on rectifying the problem internally.

I would like to thank the media, who have done an excellent job of informing the public of this problem that affects e-mail systems, and of making the public aware of the problem that exists today with this virus so that more people like yourself won't come in, open e-mail and spread this virus. I thank you for the suggestion, and we'll be working on that.

RAVES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): We're going to move from the "love bug" to the "hug drug." My next question is for the Solicitor General. As he knows, yesterday our party introduced a bill called the Raves Act. It's a very timely bill because, as the minister knows, raves have become a phenomenon not just in Toronto, but in cities like Windsor, Niagara region and the Ottawa region.

I ask the minister today to stand and suggest to us that he is going to support our bill.

Let me tell him a little bit about the bill. It allows municipalities to set the tone for what kind of rave, if any, will happen in their city or town. It makes a permit required to hold a rave, and allows the city or town to set the conditions for issuing that permit. Those conditions could be the geographic area in the town, the age limit or the time limit. It lawfully allows police authorities on the site to determine that those conditions are being met. This is what the cities and towns requested of you at a summit on March 14 at Toronto police headquarters, which I also attended.

I ask the minister today to stand and, in a very timely fashion, tell us that he will be supporting our bill.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): Indeed, both the member and I attended a conference on March 14, I believe, which was arranged by the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, Bob Runciman, who showed a great deal of leadership in trying to address what we believe is a very insidious problem.

I have to compliment the member as well, in terms of the leadership she is showing. She has shared her bill with me; in fact, the ministry is right now in the course of reviewing the bill. I have agreed to sit down with the member and discuss her bill with her, and if somehow we can find a way to combat what I think is a growing and difficult problem. The fact of the matter is that there's a lot of misinformation out there, particularly dealing with the drug ecstasy. The police community has told us this, the municipalities certainly are concerned and we as legislators in Ontario are concerned. So we do have to address it. I have a commitment to work with you to review your bill, to sit down and discuss what good things we can do to stamp out this type of problem.

Mrs Pupatello: Here is my concern: When the government sets its mind to it, it can make a bill law in three days—and the government has a precedent in making a bill law in three days. I'm asking that this be that kind of bill, that you move forward quickly.

Let me tell you a little more about the content of the bill. It holds the property owners responsible for a permit being issued before the property is leased or rented to those who are operating a rave. The conditions then have to be met in order for that permit to be issued. The bill allows the police to shut down or vacate the rave when those conditions aren't being met. Any city can refuse to have a rave at one of their own facilities, but in order for a city to have control in private commercial properties, they need this bill. That's why it is critical to have your support here.

1410

What I'm asking you is that in a very timely fashion you would just stand and say you'll support this bill so that we can move forward very quickly, as you have done on other issues. I have worked with the government offices, with police authorities and with municipal officials, not just here in Toronto but across Ontario, so that we know the content of the bill is what the municipalities themselves need to effect good regulation in this area. I'm asking you once again to stand and say that you'll support this bill.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I know the member's intentions are all good, so I'm not going to try to refer to the bill she has provided at this point in time, and to any of the terms in—the goodwill with which she has approached this.

We are reviewing this. The government has acted quickly on a number of bills before and, yes, we have passed bills in three days, but the three days is a culmination usually of months of work to get to the point where we have the proper language so that we address the problem correctly. As I've said to the member, we are reviewing her bill with a great deal of interest at the ministry to see if it actually does address the problems that are out there.

This is a problem we're all concerned with; we are concerned. As I've said to the member already, we are going to sit down and discuss her bill later on today, and yes, I have a commitment for our ministry to work with her. These are problems we are all concerned with. Certainly we over here on the government side are

concerned about raves. That's why Bob Runciman instituted this particular convention, to get people together so we can address the problem properly and get all the partners working together.

Mrs Papatello: We've already had a couple of months. The summit was held on March 14. That was two months ago. From our little office up here on the third floor we've managed to draft a bill and take into account many of the requirements and requests from different authorities involved in this issue. What's so important to know, and especially for parents to note, is that these raves have often been the sites for the drug ecstasy being used by young people.

The funny thing about this particular designer drug is that young people think it's safe, and parents often have never heard of it. The Ontario coroner told us that in 1997 there were no deaths by this drug, in 1998 there was one, in 1999 there were nine ecstasy-related deaths and in the four months since we started working on this issue, Solicitor General, there have been four more deaths of young people.

We are now in the month of May, spring, and summer is around the corner. The urgency of this matter is clear: The more raves we have as summer approaches, the more likelihood of the use and spread of ecstasy at these sites because we're not able to regulate and control them. That is why I'm asking for speed of passage of this bill, because it is a serious matter.

It's not a matter of thinking about it some more until we get it right. We've done a lot of work to ensure that it has been well written and done right. I appreciate that you know we've put work into the bill, but what is so critical is that it really depends on safety for our young people. We're counting on you to support the bill.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: If the member across wouldn't mind, I would certainly like to make sure that our ministry believes that it is right. Part of the consultation that we do within our ministry is with the Ontario coroner's office, who certainly is very interested in this problem. We all are. I've talked at length with our police partners on all of this, I've talked at length with our members who are concerned about this issue as well, and with Minister Runciman, who took the lead to try to address this problem.

I will point out that in one of our budget documents, the one entitled Building Strong and Safe Communities, which was released just earlier on this week, it says, "The government will build on its innovative approach to dealing with youth crime by expanding existing programs targeting youth crime and violence." We have a commitment to work to reduce youth crime. We have a track record of trying to address this. We have great credibility with our police partners, and yes, we will work with this member to see whether or not we can advance the best solutions possible.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Minister, today I attended a

news conference where local activists displayed the personal effects of a homeless woman, whose name was Jennifer Caldwell, who burned to death in mid-March in the Don Valley. She's one of 21 confirmed deaths of homeless people that have occurred in this city in just a few weeks. In my view we have to respond, and we need to respond to this crisis not as taxpayers but as citizens. How many deaths does it take until we get people like you and your government to respond to this housing crisis?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I know that the Minister of Community and Social Services would like to share some information with the House.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I certainly want to indicate to the member opposite that all of us on this side of the House share the concern over any tragedy, particularly the one the member spoke of earlier. It is simply unacceptable in the province of Ontario.

Homelessness is an issue which demands the attention of all levels of government, including the province of Ontario. By working together, I believe we can make a difference. This government has made a substantial commitment through the more than \$100 million in our provincial homelessness strategy, building on the more than \$2 billion a year we spend to help people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in terms of shelter. But indeed we can do more.

Through the homelessness initiatives fund, we're spending more than \$10 million to help our municipal partners right across the province on projects such as Eva's Phoenix project in the riding of the member opposite, where I had the opportunity to visit and learn about some of the exciting projects they're working on. We have a rent supplement that we are beginning to be able to roll out across the province.

Mr Marchese: Minister, in your budget you found \$4 billion for corporate taxes and not a single cent for housing—not one penny for housing. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp says we need 16,000 new rental units to be built annually. I don't say that; they say that. We have problems of tragic proportions. In many, many cities, towns and regions in the province, including Brampton, Muskoka, Peterborough and Peel region, they're opening up shelters, conducting studies and convening task forces. It's all over Ontario.

Yesterday, M. Eves said that your so-called Super-Build millennium partnership fund will be available to redevelop Toronto's waterfront. I'm assuming—and you might refer back to the Deputy Premier—that you agree that it's important to have communities on the waterfront and elsewhere that are not just playgrounds for the rich but house the homeless and other people in society without much money.

Minister, will you commit today to just one quarter of that billion dollars you're spending on urban centres and put it into housing for the homeless and low-income workers?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): We will do better than that. We will commit to continuing the government program designed to invest in people rather than in bricks and mortar, in people rather than making sure that architects get paid for boondoggle projects, in people rather than in making sure that lawyers get paid for boondoggle projects. I know it's different from what the honourable members did, but I want to assure the honourable member we are investing in people. The \$50-million fund that Minister Baird and I created last November to help an additional 10,000 families have access to rent-geared-to-income units—that is what we do on this side of the House: We invest in people. This is a serious issue, there is no doubt about it, but our approach is to invest in people rather than bricks.

Mr Marchese: I talk about housing and he talks about horseradish. How long can this minister and this government continue to blah-blah-blah their way through question period? How can he so well belittle the issue of homelessness and housing so dismissively? How can he do that when the tragedy of the boondoggle is the fact that the homeless people are dying? Skyrocketing rents for ordinary people are just shooting through the roof and no affordable housing is being built by anyone—not the federal government, not the provincial government and not the private sector that he's courting to build, because they're not building. No one is building. How can he say, "We're going to do better than that." It boggles the intelligence of the people in this place.

1420

Minister, there's something you could do. I know you don't want to do much, but there is something you could do. Earlier this week, my leader proposed a lottery to fund Olympic infrastructure, including affordable housing. We estimate it will raise \$1 billion over seven years. Will you adopt our idea of an Olympic lottery and take just one quarter of what you would raise and put it into housing for the homeless and low-income workers? It's a suggestion. I know you won't do anything else—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister.

Hon Mr Clement: I don't mean to belittle anybody. I can assure the honourable member that we saw a problem that had accumulated over a series of years, and the hundreds of millions of dollars of spending purportedly to help solve that problem was not solving the problem; the problem was getting worse. In fact, the honourable member should know that the not-for-profit housing these honourable members supported meant profits for lawyers, profits for architects, profits for planners and profits for builders, but it did not help the people it purported to serve to the extent that the honourable members try to put on the record in terms of their rhetoric.

Our solution is to help the people through rent-geared-to-income, through ensuring it is possible to build units in our province by eliminating the PST for construction materials, something the federal government has also tacked on to their last budget in terms of the GST. That is the approach that will get solutions. Will they happen

soon enough? We all want it to happen tomorrow, but we are working on rebuilding what they destroyed—

The Speaker: New question.

TAX REFUND

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): My question is to the Acting Premier. Congratulations to you and your government. You've now won the heart and soul of the Liberals in Ottawa by putting tax cuts far and above investment in health care and education. In fact, Prime Minister Chrétien called your budget a copycat version of his own budget and the "best form of flattery." I'm sure you and your colleagues are still blushing from all that praise.

But it turns out that your \$200 "the cheque is in the mail" gimmick comes with a high price tag. It's going to cost taxpayers \$3.5 million to send the cheques in the mail. Now you're crying poor to your Liberal friends in Ottawa and asking them to help you out with the mailing costs. Minister, have you forgotten that there's only one taxpayer, whether it's the Liberals or Conservatives, to pay this unnecessary \$3.5 million? It's still the taxpayers who are going to foot the bill.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Coming from the NDP who never saw a tax they didn't want or didn't like, I find this absolutely hypocritical, to say the least.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Chair of Management Board will withdraw that word, please.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I withdraw that. Sorry, Mr Speaker.

It's a good question. The people of Ontario overpaid last year \$1 billion too much in taxes. If the government were to sit on this \$1 billion until next year at the prevailing rate of 6.3% interest, it would accrue about \$64 million in interest.

While we know the opposition politicians, because of their addiction to unfairly picking Ontario's pockets and enriching themselves and the government at the expense of the taxpayers, would choose this route, we refused. It would be patently unfair for the government to make an additional \$64.3 million by sitting on this \$1 billion in taxpayers' over-contributions. Therefore, we're taking steps to mail it back as quickly as we can. Unfortunately, despite this direction, it will still take the government about three months to organize the mailing.

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Mr Christopherson: Minister, let me share with you comments that have been reported widely about how Ontarians feel about your \$200 "the cheque is in the mail" gimmick. Leslie Étienne said, "It should have been spent elsewhere, especially in health care." Michael Stewart said, "What they should have done is spent the money to prevent tuition fees from going up." Moira Carriere said, "I'll probably put it toward my student loan, but I really think it should be put toward education

and health care." It's clear to these people and other Ontarians that we can do a lot more by spending this money collectively, rather than \$200 each. They're looking for your government to show some leadership.

I'll quote to you what the finance minister said in the papers: "You don't have to be a socialist to have a social conscience. But you do have to have the financial means to be able to help." Let me say, if your government has half the social conscience that your finance minister says you have, there's \$1 billion already identified that you could put toward helping the broader good in terms of health and education. Minister, why didn't you put the \$1 billion where it will do the most good for the most people?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I was saying, the three months of interest will be \$14.5 million; the mailing costs \$3 million to \$5 million. That's more than enough to cover this mailing cost. The concept that you don't understand is that it's the taxpayers' money. It's not ours, it's not this Legislature's, it's theirs. The beauty of this is that they can use it how they wish. If they wish to spend it on tuition, pay off their student loan, pay off their debt, spend money—we're a pro-growth economy. If they make those purchases that employ small business people, they can hire more people. There's more growth, there's more revenue for the government. They overpaid and they deserve to get their money back.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a question for the Minister of Health. It's in regard to the operational review of Cambridge Memorial Hospital. Minister, you are aware of this review; it was prepared for your ministry by PricewaterhouseCoopers. The audit was clear: The underfunding of this hospital is a result of your actions and you are putting patient services in jeopardy. Let me quote the report: "Cambridge Memorial Hospital cannot balance its budget on its own without jeopardizing the range and scope of services that it should provide to its community." Your own experts have called for immediate additional funding of \$10.8 million to meet the current needs.

Minister, we know you were made aware of this report by the media over a week ago. People in Cambridge have called me looking for answers, wanting to know when this money is going to be flowing to their hospital to protect much-needed health services in Cambridge.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I hope the member is aware of the fact that our government takes very seriously its responsibility to hospitals. The member may not be aware of the fact that we actually increased funding for hospitals last year by \$600 million, and this year we will be adding an additional \$300 million to the base budgets of hospitals throughout the province. I can certainly assure the member, as I've already assured the members of the Cambridge community since the operational review was undertaken by the ministry and Cambridge

hospital, that it certainly is our intention to move forward with the recommendations.

Mr Caplan: Very interesting. The minister alludes to it, but she will not make a firm commitment on when that's going to happen. That's not good enough. Let me remind you, Minister, what your study says. It says that this hospital, the only one in Cambridge, is beyond efficient; it's stretched to its limits. Let me remind you that Cambridge Memorial Hospital is not allowed to go on redirect or critical care bypass. Cambridge has 25,000 to 30,000 families who have no access to a family doctor. They turn to the hospital for their primary care. If they don't get this almost \$11 million from you, they're going to have to further slash their bedside operation.

Minister, it's not in the briefing notes; you don't have to look at them. Just say yes. When is Cambridge Memorial Hospital going to get the money? When are you going to stand up and protect the people of Cambridge for these very-much-needed health services?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member opposite knows full well there has only been one government that has cut health funding, and that is the federal government. Despite the fact that we've lost \$1.7 billion, this year we're going to be funding health care to the tune of \$22 billion.

I am certainly well aware of the efficiency and of the outstanding service that is provided by the Cambridge hospital, having visited the hospital on numerous occasions. I'm also well aware of the report because we worked on the operational review together, and I can assure you we will be following through, and we are, on the operational review. We're quite well aware of the situation.

1430

LANDFILL

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. It relates to ministry approval for a new landfill in my riding of Peterborough. It has been brought to my attention by some of my constituents. The Peterborough landfill is considered to be a high-risk, site-specific design which depends on complex piping, pumps, and a forced main to capture leachate and pump it to the city's sewage disposal plant. It is without liners and was designed to reduce capital costs. It's my understanding there is no specific evidence or long-term operating experience to verify the proponents' claim that toxic leachate will be contained and controlled for over 100 years.

Ontario's new landfill site standards detail the use of clay and high-density liners to control toxic leachate. I understand that this new landfill can be granted approval by your ministry even though it does not incorporate any clay or composite liners. Minister, is there a loophole in the legislation which allows landfill proponents to reduce capital costs by eliminating protective liners?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I'd like to thank the member for Peterborough for his

question. The ministry is currently reviewing the environmental assessment submission from both the county and the city of Peterborough for the expansion of the Bensfort Road landfill site. Although no technical applications have been made by the city or the county for this landfill, pumps, pipes and forced mains are not uncommon in modern landfill design. Further, the Environmental Protection Act requirements for landfill typically include monitoring provisions and contingency measures to ensure the environment is protected.

My ministry recognizes the site-specific characteristics of the Peterborough landfill and has identified proposed conditions of approval in the review of the environmental assessment application surrounding groundwater protection.

There is no loophole in the legislation. It is through the next phase of applications under the Environmental Protection Act process that site-specific engineering and design details will be reviewed to ensure that they meet current regulatory requirements, including those for groundwater protection and leachate treatment.

Mr Stewart: Minister, does your ministry have any future plans to upgrade the standards of landfills that will ensure protection of our environment?

Hon Mr Newman: On August 1, 1998, this government toughened Ontario's landfill standards to ensure Ontario landfills offered state-of-the-art environmental protection. The new standards include stringent requirements for groundwater protection. The new standards include two design approaches for achieving groundwater protection.

The first approach is a site-specific design approach. This approach is a performance-based approach and it allows a proponent to design the landfill to suit the local environmental setting. It must meet the ministry's reasonable-use limits for groundwater protection set for the site.

The second approach is the generic design approach. The generic design approach allows the landfill owner to select one of two generic designs specified in the standards, provided that the conditions on further use are met. The designs incorporate single- and double-liner systems, depending on the site size, and have been developed using conservative assumptions to ensure that they will meet the ministry's reasonable-use limits. The use of the site-specific design approach is shown to be suitable and fully protective of the—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

SULPHUR IN GASOLINE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. I attended your disastrous press conference this morning at which you tried to divert attention from the latest round of devastating cuts to the Ministry of the Environment's budget by starting a phony war with Ottawa over sulphur in Ontario's gasoline. Unfortunately, the media was far

more interested in the slashing of the environment ministry by 40% since the Harris government took office in 1995 and the firing of one third of the ministry staff.

The ability of the environment ministry to catch and prosecute polluters through the use of technical, scientific, enforcement and legal staff has been crippled by a series of damaging cuts to your budget, and you meekly apologized for this hatchet job on your ministry. After your ministry has been devastated by enormous cuts to its budget and staff since the Harris government came to office, how can you possibly justify yet another \$16-million reduction found in the most recent budget of the Harris government?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment):

This morning I gave a press conference at the ministry site at Islington and the 401. What I was there to do today was to call upon the federal government to take some real action on sulphur in gasoline.

Waiting until January 2005, five years from now, is far too long to reduce the sulphur content in gasoline. I hope the member opposite was there to support me in that regard, because the federal government is the one that has jurisdiction over the level of sulphur in gasoline. It's the federal government's current regulations that would allow sulphur levels in gasoline in Ontario to actually double without any repercussions, and that's wrong. The Liberals are missing in action; that's where the Liberals are.

I also sent Environment Minister David Anderson a letter today, calling upon him to take some real action on the part of the federal government with respect to sulphur. I said to him, "Reducing sulphur levels in gasoline would be a good"—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Bradley: I can understand your reluctance to talk about the latest huge cuts to the Ministry of the Environment. Your response to that today was pathetic.

Let me call your bluff on sulphur in gasoline. British Columbia has a regulation which regulates the cleanliness of gas in that province. Ontario regulates sulphur from boilers and outboard motors. We've had a regulation dating back from the late 1980s that deals with volatile organic compounds in gasoline. You have the power. You, Minister, have the power to regulate sulphur in gas at the retail pump.

I know your government fought hard alongside the oil industry to try to prevent this when negotiations took place, and then when it looked like the feds were going to move drastically, you tried to get out in front of the parade.

But let me ask you this question: Will you tell the House and the people of Ontario that your government will pass a regulation, as you can, under the Environmental Protection Act to require the oil companies to produce gas that meets the 30 parts per million of sulphur by the year 2002? I'm calling your bluff. Will you do that, Minister? Will the Harris government act?

Hon Mr Newman: I take from that question that the member opposite was there at the press conference today to support the reduction in sulphur in gasoline. I thought that's what I just heard today.

What I mentioned today was that the federal government controls what goes into gas tanks and, ultimately, into engines. If you have high-sulphur gasoline going into tanks and engines, you have high quantities of sulphur coming out of tailpipes. That's what the provincial government has responsibility over, the emissions.

If the member opposite had been listening carefully at the press conference today, he would have also heard that I said I've asked my ministry officials to see what else can be possibly done to reduce sulphur in gasoline. That's what I have asked, and I'd hoped he would bring that forward.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is to the minister responsible for children. Being a father of two daughters, I am very concerned about children's well-being and their future.

Minister, recently our colleague the Honourable Ernie Eves, Minister of Finance, announced many new initiatives for children and youth in the Ontario budget 2000. Could you please tell us what this great news will mean for children and families across the province?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I'd like to thank my colleague Raminder Gill, the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, for this important question.

Our government has demonstrated a tremendous commitment to the health and well-being of children, especially in this year's budget. For the first time ever, we have singled out children with a separate budget document, which is our full, complete commitment to the children of this province, in writing, with the dollar numbers right there for everybody to see that are assigned totally for children.

We are taking our responsibility, which ranges from new funding for child health and strengthening child safety—we have an additional \$6 million annually for preschool speech and language. We have a new infant hearing screening program—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Gill: Minister, that sounds wonderful, but how will this budget provide more opportunities and support for low-income families with children and also strengthen child safety across the province?

Hon Mrs Marland: All these programs are for all children who have those specific needs. We have \$2 million more annually for the Canadian Living Foundation for children's nutrition programs in schools, and specifically, to recognize the special circumstances faced by working single parents, the government will introduce a new benefit for single parents as part of the Ontario child care supplement for working families. It is expected that

this new benefit will assist some 63,000 single parents with 77,000 children. We are committed to the children of this province. We continue to invest in all areas in terms of priority of outcomes to improve these children's lives.

One final thing I must put on the record is that \$2 million to develop local strategies to address the—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

1440

PRIMARY CARE REFORM

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Health. I want to return to primary care reform, Minister. You know that I have been very skeptical about your government's political will to actually implement primary care reform. You keep saying all the right things, but I don't see them in action. Again in the budget you made a great announcement about your commitment to primary care reform. So I thought that maybe I would take another tack. If we're saying the same things and if we really agree we want to get there, then maybe the "You say, I say" approach doesn't make a lot of sense.

I'd like to ask you to show me some of the details of how you are going to implement it, so I can believe and work with you to get this job done. You say you are going to get to 80% of Ontario doctors in four years. You say you are going to spend \$100 million over four years to do that—that's \$25 million a year. Yet in the OMA agreement you say that the formula for conversion has yet to be negotiated.

Will you tell me how the \$25 million a year is going to be spent? Is it just for physicians? Is it part of the formula for conversion? Does it deal with the nurses, the nurse practitioners, the social workers, the nutritionists, the others in primary care clinics? Would you please give us some detail of how that is going to accomplish your goal of 80% in four years?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I am pleasantly surprised and quite looking forward to the statement by the member that she wants to work with us. We certainly would appreciate her support in wanting to move forward with us on primary care reform. I know that her party has supported this initiative, although I know at the same time that it has been your position that physicians and patients should be coerced into this program.

As you know, our proposal is that we would allow for voluntary enrolment of both physicians and patients into the program. I can assure you that we will be rolling out all the details on this issue and the other issues contained in the budget in the next few weeks and months.

Ms Lankin: The condition upon which you get my support is that you actually answer the questions and give us some details. What I asked you specifically was: How is your \$25 million a year over four years going to accomplish getting us to 80% of the physicians in primary care clinics?

Specifically, does that money cover the other health professionals who will be involved in primary care clinics? Specifically, is that money yet to be negotiated, as it says in the OMA agreement, with respect to the formula for conversion from fee-for-service to new primary care clinic funding? We would like some specifics here.

I guess the most important question is: If, over the course of the next three to four years, you are not reaching your goal of 80% of physicians in new primary care clinics, what are you going to do at that point in time? Will you then finally say you will make it mandatory to have primary care reform in this province?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's been proven time and again that it would be inappropriate to force patients or physicians, or any other member of the primary care team, to participate in this program. Our government does not believe in coercion. We believe in voluntary enrolment of patients and physicians.

I'd just like to quote from the Hamilton Spectator. The Hamilton Spectator says, regarding primary care reform, and I think that probably their comments were directed at the third party, "The opposition parties didn't risk the wrath of the OMA by mandating primary care reform when they were in power." I would say to the member of the third party, why did you not undertake primary care reform and move the people in this province forward—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up. New question.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Minister, your government delivered a budget Tuesday that gave the farmers of Ontario absolutely nothing. There is not one red cent of new spending for farmers, who are facing their biggest crisis since the Dirty Thirties. You missed the boat, Minister. You had a golden opportunity to give the farmers a break on the retail sales tax that would have put \$30 million into farmers' pockets. Instead, Mike Harris gave \$635 million to wealthy folks to play in the stock market.

Why didn't you fight for them, Minister, at the cabinet table? You failed them. Farmers need an expanded retail sales tax exemption today, not some time in the future. Will you promise that, here and now?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I find it very curious that the member opposite would suggest that there's nothing in the budget for farmers and for rural Ontario when in fact the budget for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, to look after the needs of rural Ontario and all farmers, has been increased by 50%. It's the highest increase of any ministry in the budget.

On the issue of helping farmers, because they are in difficult times, the budget includes \$40 million more for the farm safety net program.

Incidentally, I want to speak to the member opposite. Just a few months ago, the media reported we shouldn't be going after the money for a fair share for Ontario's farmers; we should spend our time at home and make do with what little we were getting from Ottawa. We didn't listen to him. We went to Ottawa and got \$40 million a year more for our farmers. He has a nerve to stand up and say we're not doing enough.

Mr Hoy: Minister, there was nothing for agriculture. You're playing the same old shell game over and over again. Eighty million dollars is unspent and reannounced money. Everything else is repackaged infrastructure money from other ministries to hide the cuts in your agricultural portfolio.

Infrastructure only benefits farmers indirectly. Why did you even bother to consult with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture? You gave them nothing. They've said you neglected agriculture and your budget missed the mark.

Minister, the federal government provides this exemption. Other provinces provide this exemption and field services. On top of the cuts you have already made, you're adding insult to injury. You must put farmers on an equal footing with other jurisdictions to keep them competitive. You must give them the RST enhancement today. Will you do it now?

Hon Mr Hardeman: It's quite obvious that the member opposite has done a good job of listening to the president of the federation of agriculture, who suggested that the only thing he wanted for our farmers was to have a tax exemption on the sales tax on farm input. I want to point out that that's a very important issue, that we should find a way to reduce farm input costs by \$20 million or \$30 million a year. But I find it much more important to make sure that we put \$40 million more in the budget so we can help those farmers who are truly in difficult times.

The sales tax exemption would be very beneficial to our farmers, but it is only beneficial to farmers who are making purchases, not to the farmers who no longer have enough money to pay for those purchases. We have a program in place to look after our farmers.

I also want to point out that the federation of agriculture brought forward many proposals that we improve rural economic development—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

1450

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question is for the Solicitor General. Minister, constituents in my riding have consistently told me that they take the issue of community safety very seriously at local events, on radio open-line shows and going door to door. People I've talked to in Niagara all believe that we should be able to live in our communities free from the fear of crime.

Recently you participated in a crime prevention conference in Niagara Falls. Could you please tell the House and the people of Ontario about the success of this conference.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): I thank the member from Niagara Falls for a tougher question than the one from Chatham-Kent over there.

First of all, I must say to the member from Niagara Falls that his commitment to the public safety is second to none in this province, and to his community as well. Last week I attended a conference to deal with crime prevention and tourism in Niagara Falls. This was a partnership between the city of Niagara Falls, the Niagara Falls police, the merchants, in fact, in Niagara Falls. That's what made it so significant. It was all parts of the community coming together to try to address what they saw not necessarily as a problem, but to try to take some preventive actions in terms of crime prevention.

Originally they were afraid that the wrong message might get out, that people might think that somehow there was crime on the streets of Niagara Falls. But Niagara Falls is a very safe city, and I commend them for saying and trying to do something to make the streets of Niagara Falls safer. During that, they looked at the design of their communities, working with the communities, how they can all partner together to increase tourism and make sure we have the right message that tourism is safe and visitors are safe in Niagara Falls.

Mr Maves: Minister, everyone in Ontario has the right to be safe from crime. We should be able to walk in our neighbourhoods, use public transit, live in our homes and send our children to school free from the fear of criminals. Our government has made a commitment to the people of Ontario to improve the safety of our communities, for instance, the Partners against Crime initiative, which invested \$150 million into putting up 1,000 new front-line police officers on the streets. More police officers on our streets and providing police with the tools they need is one of the ways our government is helping to make our streets safer. But specifically, Minister, could you tell my constituents what you are doing in the Niagara area to help make our streets safer?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Once again, the member from Niagara Falls started off his question by talking about one of our best programs we have, and that's the community policing program. That's an investment, as he mentioned, of about \$150 million to get 1,000 net new police officers on the streets of this province.

What does this mean? In Niagara Falls this means that 55 brand new officers are now available to help make Niagara Falls safer. You know, we thought this was such a great program that in our recent budget we've indicated that \$35 million will be allocated toward community policing. I think this is significant, because it says to the communities of Ontario that we, your government, feel it's important for us to have police officers there because we believe that's the best way to combat crime in this province.

In addition to that, we've also given over \$150,000 for the RIDE program for Niagara Falls and over \$1 million through our Partners in Community Safety program as well.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I'd like to ask a question of the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Today your ministry put forward a corridor map for the Oak Ridges moraine through Richmond Hill and it delivered this corridor map to the Ontario Municipal Board. Minister, when will the public, the thousands of citizens across the moraine, especially in Richmond Hill, who are very interested in protecting the moraine, get a chance to see this map and be able to have input in this map that your ministry presented today? When will we see it? When will we have a chance, especially the citizens, to at least have their input in the corridor you presented today to the OMB?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question.

Interjection: And the answer is?

Hon Mr Clement: The answer is, it's a public map.

Mr Colle: Minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member take his seat. Stop the clock, please. Start the clock. The member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Colle: Minister, it's about public input. Your ministry gave this document to the Ontario Municipal Board. You have to be a lawyer or a consultant to be at the Ontario Municipal Board. The public wants a say on this map your ministry presented. I asked you, will you make your map public? Will you allow for input on this map on the Oak Ridges moraine?

Laughter.

Mr Colle: I know the members there think it's funny, but this is about the public having input. I know you don't like public input—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member take his seat. Order. Stop the clock. There was some heckling. We're going to stop the clock so you can continue with the question. Sorry for the interruption. The government was rather loud. I will start the clock and you can continue.

Mr Colle: Minister, again, it's about input. You have delivered this proposal to the Ontario Municipal Board: a corridor across the moraine. It is before the Ontario Municipal Board. When will the public, who live and work and love the moraine, have a chance to have a say on the map: its makeup, what's included, what's excluded? That's the question. When do we see the map and when does the public have input into it?

Hon Mr Clement: In all seriousness, as I said, obviously the map is a public document because it's before a public board. The public board is engaged in public hearings. So if there are any members of the community

who wish to participate in the public hearings, there are ways for that to happen.

Let's be clear, because I don't want any ambiguity on this issue. We were asked by the OMB to produce a corridor that would be consistent with the provincial policy statement and the 1991 guidelines. We have complied with the request of the OMB. We have consulted with, I'm sure, the best scientists in the province. We've consulted with the Ministry of Natural Resources. We've consulted with the conservation authorities. There has been lots of consultation on this document. But it is a scientific document and I support my ministry's position that this document should be presented to the board, as per the board's request. After it is presented, I'm sure the board, through its public hearings, can engage in the public consultation the honourable member and I support.

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I wish to question the Minister of Natural Resources. In March 1999 Premier Mike Harris announced Ontario's Living Legacy. This innovative strategy was the greatest increase in the history of Ontario's system of parks and protected areas. We know that Ontario has some of the most beautiful scenery in the world and this strategy greatly increases the amount of protected land in our province. Ontario's Living Legacy is by far one of the best initiatives by any government to safeguard and protect our natural heritage for generations to come.

Minister, in support of this major parks expansion, again the largest such increase in history, what opportunities exist for young people in delivering the government's Living Legacy objectives?

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Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank the member for the question. Certainly Living Legacy is an announcement that we all can be proud of: 378 new parks and protected areas across the province; some six million acres of land protected for future generations.

I am pleased to inform the member today that we recently made an announcement that our support for youth in this province from this ministry will almost double this year to \$10 million. That includes support for the Ontario Ranger program, which I know many people have enjoyed being part of for many years in the province of Ontario. That program will continue. We have tripled the size of the conservation rangers, a new program that allows for some conservation efforts in parts of the province where they haven't previously taken place.

In addition to that, we have a new internship program, so some of our young graduates from post-secondary and people who are involved with post-secondary can come into the ministry with new ideas, new skills, and help us create all of these new parks. It's a win-win.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It is now two days in a row

following the budget that neither the Premier nor the finance minister has been available to respond and be publicly held accountable to the budget. I would ask you to get involved and ensure that the Premier and finance minister are here—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member will know that is not a point of order. The Speaker does not control the schedule of anybody coming in here.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I have a statement of business of the House for next week.

On Monday afternoon, we'll continue the budget debate.

On Monday evening, we'll debate Bill 69, the Labour Relations Amendment Act.

On Tuesday afternoon, we'll debate Bill 69, the Labour Relations Amendment Act.

On Tuesday evening, we expect to do Bill 72, the Taxpayer Dividend Act.

On Wednesday afternoon, we will debate Bill 62, the Direct Democracy through Municipal Referendums Act.

On Wednesday evening, we expect to do Bill 72, the Taxpayer Dividend Act.

On Thursday morning, during private members' business, we will discuss ballot items number 23 and 24.

On Thursday afternoon, we expect to do Bill 72, the Taxpayer Dividend Act.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we have petitions, in the members' gallery we have Mr Declan Fearon, who is the chair of the South Armagh Farmers and Residents Committee—I believe that's from Ireland—joining us today.

PETITIONS

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians with a developmental disability are in growing danger of inadequate support because compensation to staff of not-for-profit agencies is, based on a recent survey, on average, 20% to 25% less than compensation for others doing the same work in provincial institutions or similar work in other settings; and

"Whereas there are hundreds of senior parents in Ontario who saved the Ontario government millions of dollars by keeping their child with a developmental disability at home, and who are still caring for their adult child; and

"Whereas there is no place for most of these adults with a developmental disability to go when the parents are no longer able to provide care; and

"Whereas these parents live with constant anxiety and despair; and

"Whereas these adult children will end up in Ontario nursing homes and hospitals if there is no appropriate place to provide care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To significantly increase compensation for workers in not-for-profit agencies so that it is comparable to the compensation of government-funded workers in identical or similar occupations; and

"To provide the resources necessary to give appropriate support to Ontarians with a developmental disability who at present have no place to go when their parents are no longer able to care for them."

I have signed that petition.

PESTICIDES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I have a petition signed by 6,000 Ontario residents from Alliston to Woodstock on the elimination of the cosmetic use of pesticides. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the following cities in Ontario—Toronto, Waterloo, Ottawa, Kitchener and Cambridge—already have in place restrictive policies for the landscape/cosmetic use of pesticides on publicly owned land; and

"Whereas synthetic chemical pesticides and fertilizers now routinely used for landscape/cosmetic use are harmful to human health and the environment; and

"Whereas these products are unnecessary because sustainable, healthy and effective lawn care alternatives are available,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The province of Ontario phase out the landscape/cosmetic use of synthetic chemical pesticides on both public and privately owned land by the year 2001 and immediately develop and implement a comprehensive public education program to the efficiency of sustainable lawn and garden maintenance practices."

I will affix my signature to these petitions as I agree with them wholeheartedly.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the prayer, Our Father, also called the Lord's Prayer has always been used to open the proceedings of municipal chambers"—and I can say that for Clarington—"and the Ontario Legislative Assembly since the beginning of Upper Canada under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe in the 18th century; and

"Whereas such use of the Lord's Prayer is part of Ontario's long-standing heritage and a tradition that continues to play a significant role in contemporary Ontario life; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is the most meaningful expression of the religious convictions of many Ontario citizens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario maintain the use of the Lord's Prayer in its proceedings, in accordance with its long-standing established custom and do all in its power to maintain the use of this prayer in municipal chambers in Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this petition on behalf of my constituents of the riding of Durham.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Oak Ridges moraine in Richmond Hill is the headwaters for the east Humber, Rouge River and the east Don River watersheds, as well as being a critical recharge area for huge aquifers on the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Oak Ridges moraine in Richmond Hill contains five areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSI) including Bond Lake and bog ANSI, Wilcox Lake wetlands ANSI, Jefferson Forest ANSI, White Rose bog ANSI and Simeon Forest ANSI; and

"Whereas this area has the largest concentration of kettle lakes and kettle bogs in the GTA supporting numerous fish species and regionally rare plants; and

"Whereas this area supports the highest biodiversity in the GTA with 925 plant species, 99 breeding bird species, 16 reptile and amphibian species and 15 mammal species; and

"Whereas the natural water aquifer recharge functions of the moraine will be replaced by storm water management and infiltration ponds resulting in the concentration of pollutants from urban streets and lawns; and

"Whereas now is the last opportunity for the creation of a major natural park on the Oak Ridges moraine along the east-west Yonge Street corridor;

"We, the undersigned, petition the provincial government to immediately enact strong measures to protect the Oak Ridges moraine corridor in the town of Richmond Hill within an established kettle lakes park."

I've happily signed my name to the petition.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government's plan to force the sale of subsidized housing in Hamilton-Wentworth will create a crisis for 700 local families; and

"Whereas in addition to these 700 families there are 3,700 other families on waiting lists who will be left without affordable accommodation; and

"Whereas the Harris government's housing sell-off is mean-spirited and targets the poorest families who are now threatened with possible eviction;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario direct the Harris government to save these affordable housing units for low-income families, and support new affordable housing to help the 3,700 families on waiting lists in our community."

I add my name to those of these petitioners.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to pass to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

It's my pleasure to attach my name to it.

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HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licensing fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I have affixed my signature to it.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have further petitions from Cecil Mackasey and Rick Roberts of CAW Local 222. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances known as carcinogens; and

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to carcinogens;

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances; and

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer and that the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

On behalf of my NDP colleagues, I add my name to those of the petitioners.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): The member representing Durham read a petition to keep the

Lord's Prayer in the Legislative Assembly, and I have an identical petition:

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer, also called Our Father, has been used to open the proceedings of municipal chambers and the Ontario Legislative Assembly since the beginning of Upper Canada in the 18th century;

"Whereas such use of the Lord's Prayer is part of Ontario's long-standing heritage and a tradition that continues to play a significant role in contemporary Ontario life; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is a most meaningful expression of the religious convictions of many Ontario citizens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario maintain the use of the Lord's Prayer in its proceedings, in accordance with its long-standing established custom, and do all in its power to maintain use of this prayer in municipal chambers in Ontario."

I affix my signature to these petitions.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a petition. It is to the Ontario provincial Legislature.

"To protect and maintain the natural features of the Oak Ridges moraine in the town of Richmond Hill for future generations.

"Whereas the Oak Ridges moraine in Richmond Hill is the headwaters for the East Humber, Rouge River and East Don River watersheds as well as being a critical recharge area for huge aquifers on the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the Oak Ridges moraine in Richmond Hill contains five areas of natural and scientific interest, including Bond Lake and bog area of natural and scientific interest, Wilcox Lake wetlands area of natural and scientific interest, Jefferson Forest area of natural and scientific interest, White Rose bog area of natural and scientific interest, and Simeon Forest area of natural and scientific interest; and

"Whereas this area has the largest concentration of kettle lakes and kettle bogs in the GTA supporting numerous fish species and regionally rare plants; and

"Whereas this area supports the highest biodiversity in the greater Toronto area with 925 plant species, 99 breeding bird species, 16 reptile and amphibian species and 15 mammal species; and

"Whereas the natural water aquifer recharge functions of the moraine will be replaced by storm water management and infiltration ponds resulting in the concentration of pollutants from urban streets and lawns; and

"Whereas now is the last opportunity for the creation of a major natural park on the Oak Ridges moraine along the east-west Yonge Street corridor;

"We, the undersigned, petition the provincial government to immediately enact strong measures to protect the

Oak Ridges moraine corridor in the town of Richmond Hill within an established kettle lakes park."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and I have affixed my signature to it.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's a continuation of the one that was read by my colleague from Brampton.

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2000 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 3, 2000, on the amendment to the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm pleased to be able to take part in this budget debate. Let me at the outset add some recently breaking news. I listened to some of the Liberal speakers yesterday and I understood that they were opposed to this government's budget, but I find today that Prime Minister Chrétien—I understand he is a Liberal—in reference to the Harris government's budget says that the "best form of flattery is when another government is copying" you, referring to the federal Liberal budget. The Liberal finance minister says that the Conservative finance minister, Ernie Eves,

simply borrowed the Liberals' playbook for their tax-cut budget.

I want the Conservative members to know that the Liberals like your budget. There is a reason why they like it.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Do you still have a party nationally?

Mr Hampton: I see some of the Liberals are reacting to this a bit.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): You've touched a nerve.

Mr Hampton: Yes, I've touched a nerve here. There is a reason why they like it. The reason is that the budget that was presented by the Harris Conservative government is in fact a carbon copy of the budget that was presented by the Liberals some two months ago in Ottawa. I want to point out the glaring similarities so that people across Ontario will know how identical the agendas of the Liberals and the Conservatives really are.
1520

Both the Liberals in Ottawa and the Conservatives here are dealing with a budget surplus situation, budgets that have been balanced on the backs of working families who are worried about the crumbling quality of their health care, their community hospital, the schools, the colleges, the universities, protection of the environment, affordable housing; families who are worried about the rising cost of living, about higher housing prices, higher tuition fees, more and more health care user fees. Both the Liberals in Ottawa and the Conservatives in Ontario ignored the concerns of real people and focused on rewarding corporate Canada, corporate Ontario and the wealthiest of the wealthy.

Just a few examples:

The Liberals in Ottawa put 40% of their budget surplus into tax cuts for corporations and the well-off. The Conservatives in Ontario blew \$5.2 billion in tax cuts for the wealthiest of the wealthy and for Bay Street corporations. Some \$3.95 billion of the tax cuts went straight into the pockets of Bay Street corporations—corporations that already have obscene profit levels, but the Liberals and Conservatives believe they need more. Forty-two of the 67 so-called tax cuts went straight into the pockets of corporations that already have the most obscene of profits.

The Liberals in Ottawa helped their wealthy friends by cutting corporate taxes by 7%. The Conservatives are going to help their wealthy friends by cutting corporate taxes in the same way, giving away \$3.95 billion in corporate tax gifts to the well-off.

If ever there was a tax which is aimed at getting at some of the wealth, it's the capital gains tax. The Liberals in Ottawa cut the capital gains tax by two thirds of taxable income. The Conservatives weren't quite as bad. They only cut it 50%. I have to say, on this one you're not up to your Liberal cousins yet. You're not quite there in terms of your desire to reward the wealthiest of the wealthy, but I have no doubt that you're going to get there.

The Liberals in Ottawa give tax breaks to those wealthy enough to play the stock market; so did the Conservatives.

The Liberals in Ottawa helped their wealthy friends by upping the foreign content limits on RRSP contributions to 30%. I know that this won't mean a lot to the average Ontarian because the average Ontarian probably doesn't have enough money that they can start to worry about the foreign-content part of the RRSP.

Not to be outdone by the Liberals, the Conservatives want to raise the RRSP contribution limit to \$15,500 a year. That's more than someone on minimum wage makes. This government wants to give a gift to the wealthiest in this province which amounts to more than what someone working the minimum wage will make in a year. I have to tell you, you're going to have to go some to catch up with the Liberals, because they're ahead of you on that one.

The Liberals in Ottawa got rid of the 5% upper income surtax on those in the \$85,000-a-year income bracket. The Conservatives gave one third of their tax breaks to the 5% who were at the top of the income ladder. Those with incomes of \$330,000 a year or more got \$733 million. Sorry—the top five is actually in excess of \$95,000, just to show you again how similar the agendas are of the Liberals in Ottawa and the Conservatives here in Ontario.

I haven't talked about health care yet, I haven't talked about education yet and I haven't talked about protection of the environment yet, because when you read the Liberals' budget and the Conservatives' budget, they're all about tax cuts for the well-off, tax cuts for corporate Canada and corporate Ontario. There is very little mention of things like protecting the environment, education and health care.

Both the Liberals in Ottawa and the Conservatives here have tried to package their tax cuts to make them look like they are going to benefit low- and middle-income families. But we now have had a chance to do the numbers, and the truth is that both the Liberals' budget and the Conservatives' budget are tailored for the well-off, and I want people at home to understand this. As an example, when you do the numbers on the tax cuts that were announced on Tuesday, someone who has an income of \$330,000 a year—I don't think anyone in my constituency has an income of \$330,000 a year—is going to get a \$10,000 tax cut. For someone who has an income of \$30,000 a year or less—and here I'm talking about 40% of Ontario taxpayers—their tax cut is going to be \$194 or less, about 50 cents a day. So 40% of the people in Ontario get a crumb while the 0.5% who have an income of \$330,000 a year walk home with \$10,000 courtesy of this government—again, about equal to what somebody working hard for the minimum wage would get in a year. That is how unbalanced this is.

I say again, the Liberals in Ottawa think this is a wonderful budget. Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin are on your side. They think this is a wonderful budget.

There are more details. The government handles their budget as if it is a Monopoly game. They're going to be

mailing out this one-time-only \$200 cheque, but there is some fine print that people need to know. The people of Ontario who are at the lowest end of the income scale aren't to get the \$200. In fact, the people in Ontario who work for the minimum wage, who work for low wages, seniors and those whose income is so low that they don't pay provincial income tax get nothing. So 25% of the people of Ontario who are the bottom of the income ladder get nothing.

Again I want to mention, if you have an income of \$330,000, this government is going to give you \$10,000 on top of the money Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin are going to give you. But if you are at the bottom of the income scale, you get nothing. You don't even get the \$200 for passing Go. By the way, that's a million people. At least a million people in Ontario are essentially being told: "Your income is low. You don't get anything."

The reality behind both the budget tabled by the Liberals in Ottawa and the budget tabled by the Conservatives here is this: They both have unbalanced priorities on giving mega tax cuts to corporations and the well-off at the expense of the health care system we all need, the education system we all need, the strong community services we all need and the protection of the environment we all need. That is what I want to talk about now. I want to talk a bit about health care.

When you look at health care, that's where the childish hypocrisy and finger-pointing practices of both the Liberals in Ottawa and the Conservatives in Ontario converge into the theatre of the absurd. In the weeks leading up to the last federal budget, the Harris government—surprise, surprise—ran a whole bunch of TV ads. Were they asking for more health care funding? Were they saying that health care should be a priority? No. They were saying that tax cuts for the well-off and corporations should be the priority. And what did the Liberals in Ottawa do? The Liberals in Ottawa listened to them. For every dollar in tax cuts for corporations and the well-off, they could find only two cents for health care. That is the Liberal record on health care: For every dollar in tax cuts for the well-off, they could find only two cents for health care.

1530

When we examine this budget, go through and count very carefully, what we find is that for every dollar the Conservatives in Ontario had for corporate tax cuts and tax cuts for the very well off, they had one cent for health care. So I have to say the Liberals are one penny better than you are for health care, and that's about it. That's about the difference between your collective agendas for health care that all people in this province need.

We need to go through the line that this government is trying to put out there for health care. They're saying, "We're spending more on health care than ever before." What they've done is this: They took a whole bunch of lump sums and tried to spin the story that this is all going to happen this year. For example, for research on safe blood supply they say \$21 million. But when you look at it, it's only \$7 million this year. It's \$21 million spread

over three or four years; only \$7 million this year. Then they say expansion of Ontario's primary care system, \$100 million. But when you read the fine print, it's only \$25 million. When you read all of the numbers and you read the fine print, you discover that this government says they're investing \$655 million in new health care programs, but it's only \$168 million. The other money might be spent in some future years; we don't know. So it's really the case of a wonderful spin line, but when you examine the numbers it ain't there.

We talked to some nurses. We asked the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the Ontario Nurses Association, "What do you make of this?" They said: "You know, a year ago this government said they were going to hire 10,000 new nurses. We've been out there looking for the 10,000 new nurses and we can't find them." Actually, this government has a history of this. They've got a history of making health care announcements and then nothing happens. That's exactly what it is here. They announce \$655 million in new investment in health care, but when you read the fine print it's \$168 million.

What comes out of this? A lot comes out of it. Let's look at hospitals, for example. We know that hospitals in Ontario are right now carrying a \$1.8-billion deficit. That is how much they are underfunded as a result of the budget cuts imposed in the last five years by this government. So they've got a \$1.8-billion budget deficit. This government says, "We're going to fix that." When you read the fine print, all they have for hospitals this year is \$300 million. When you talk to the Ontario Hospital Association, they say that the \$300 million in actual money is closer to \$100 million, meaning that Ontario hospitals are still going to be left with a deficit of at least \$1.5 billion, probably closer to \$1.7 billion. What does that mean for patients across Ontario? I think they know what it means. It means when you go to the emergency room, you wait and you wait and you wait. When you need a hospital bed, very often you're going to be told there isn't one. When you need a nurse you're going to be told, "Sorry, there isn't one." What it means is the cracks and the holes that have been appearing in the hospital system are going to continue. That's what it means.

Then there's the issue of nurses. Last week, the government's own report indicated that because of this government's cuts and because of their underfunding of health care, there's going to be a shortage of nurses—a critical shortage of nurses. Was there any money, was there any plan, any strategy in this budget to deal with the shortage of nurses? We read the fine print. The media asked the Minister of Health. What's the answer? There is no strategy, there is no plan—a chronic shortage, a crisis in terms of a shortage of nurses and this government has no plan.

I want to talk just a bit about the people who are closest to me, the people I represent from my own part of Ontario. There are 100 communities in northern and rural Ontario that do not have sufficient doctors. The shortage

is actually in excess of 415 doctors. Kenora in my constituency, Dryden, Sioux Lookout, Red Lake, Atikokan—these are all communities that are short of doctors. Is there a strategy in this budget, when this government has so much money to give away in corporate tax cuts, so much money to give away to the wealthiest in Ontario, to deal with the doctor shortage?

The government says, "We're going to pay the tuition fees of those people who are going to medical school who agree that when they're done they'll go to northern Ontario and rural Ontario to practise, to areas where there's a shortage." Underserved areas, they're called. That's the one thing. Even if you want to be charitable, even if you want to be generous to the government, it amounts to paying—they're going to provide no more than \$750,000 a year, and what this might do, seven or eight years from now, is generate some medical school graduates who are prepared to go north or into rural Ontario. The well-off get their tax cuts now; people who are facing a doctor shortage in Ontario are being told by this government to wait seven or eight years. That's how long it's going to take to produce one physician, and in terms of specialists it will take even longer.

I have to let people know this idea of paying the tuition fees is not new. It was actually tried in the early 1980s by a former Conservative government, only then they called it a bursary. You got a bursary at medical school if you agreed to go north to practise. But there was a problem with it. Most people, when they go to medical school, are young. They haven't really thought about where they want to practise; they haven't thought about what kind of medicine they want to practise. Maybe while they're in medical school they meet someone and they get married, they form a relationship. Their partner says: "I don't want to go here or there. I want to live somewhere else." The bursary strategy that was tried by a former Conservative government in the early 1980s was a complete failure.

I know that this strategy is very much favoured by this government and very much favoured by the Liberals because they can't come up with any other idea, but I just say to people, it will be seven or eight years before this produces any physicians at all, and I doubt very much if it's going to be any more successful this time than it was last time. But that is the sum total of their strategy. With \$5.2 billion in corporate tax cuts and tax cuts for the well-off—if they'd taken only 1% of that, \$50 million, and devoted it to working out a strategy to ensure that people in their own community had physicians, it would have made a huge difference. Just 1% of what you gave away to the corporations on Bay Street and the wealthiest of the wealthy, and that is too much to ask.

Then there's the issue of cancer patients. I want to quote the vice-chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Mr Gerry Loughheed. Cancer Care Ontario is a government agency. This is what Mr Loughheed had to say about this government: "This government, in respect of cancer patients, is practising health care apartheid." I want people across Ontario to know why he said that and why he's right.

We know that this government has made huge mistakes in cancer strategy. We know that this government, when they came into power, cancelled the new cancer treatment centres in Durham, Mississauga and elsewhere in southern Ontario. Not only that, but they cancelled the training programs for technicians and nurses and other health care providers who would then be able to work in those cancer centres. So four years later, they discover that there are literally tens of thousands of cancer patients in southern Ontario who cannot get cancer treatment. It is not good to admit to the public that they made a big mistake, that they literally cut a critical element of Ontario's health care strategy and have left tens of thousands of cancer patients out in the cold.

1540

So right away they strategize, "How do we cover this up?" They come up with a plan. They're going to pay the full cost to send cancer patients to Buffalo, to Detroit, and also they're going to pay the full cost to transport cancer patients from southern Ontario to Sudbury and Thunder Bay. So a cancer patient from southern Ontario who has to go to Thunder Bay or Sudbury gets their complete airfare paid, gets their taxi fare paid, gets their hotel paid for, gets their food and everything else paid for—thousands of dollars for each trip.

But the problem is, if you're a cancer patient from Pickle Lake, from Red Lake, from Kapuskasing and you have to go to Thunder Bay or Sudbury, this transportation allowance doesn't apply. You find your own way there. Yes, you can apply to the northern health travel grant and maybe get \$100 to offset some of the cost. When the cost is in the thousands, you can get \$100. That's this government's sense of equity.

What is really outlandish about this is that I know cancer patients who are travelling six hours in the middle of winter, at 30 below zero over icy highways, to get to Thunder Bay. They have to go in their own car to the treatment centre because they can't afford the \$600, \$700, \$800 airfare. One patient from southern Ontario, where this government is trying to cover up its disaster, gets a \$2,000 expense allowance to get to cancer treatment in Thunder Bay and back, and somebody who lives in Pickle Lake, Donna Graham, spends six hours in 30-below weather on an open highway travelling there and pays the rest of the cost out of her own pocket.

I can give you lists of cancer patients who have said: "I can't go to my next appointment with the cancer specialist. I can't go for my next treatment. I don't have the money."

This is health care apartheid. But what is really outlandish about this is that this government knew what it was doing. It specifically provided a special allocation to pay for cancer patients from southern Ontario and said: "We don't care about the cancer patients in northern Ontario. Let them find their own way there, and if they can't afford it, we don't care."

Probably \$1 million, \$2 million would have done away with this health care apartheid. At a time when this government gave away \$5.2 billion in tax cuts to Bay

Street corporations and tax cuts to the wealthiest of the wealthy, they were unwilling, they didn't care enough to do away with this health care apartheid. They're saying to the cancer patients in northern Ontario, "You don't count; you don't matter." Disgusting, outrageous, shameful, ugly, odious.

It doesn't end there. However, I don't just want to talk about health care. I want to talk about education, because just as in health care this government duplicated the Liberals in Ottawa in terms of education, two years ago the tally for post-secondary education cuts by the Liberals in Ottawa reached a whopping \$1.5 billion a year. That's how much the Liberals in Ottawa have taken out of post-secondary education: colleges and universities. That hasn't changed today. We saw in the Liberal budget two months ago once again that for every dollar they had for corporate tax cuts and tax cuts for the well-off, they could only find two cents for health care. They could find nothing for education, nothing for universities and colleges.

What do we see in your budget of this past Tuesday? True to the theme, you followed the Liberals' lead. There was nothing in your budget to provide the investment in post-secondary education that our university and college students need, nothing to ease their debt load. I can tell you that there are college and university students out there with \$30,000 debt loads, \$40,000 debt loads, \$50,000 debt loads. Imagine this. All these people want is to access an education so they can make a contribution to our society, so they can participate in the economy. At the same time that this government has \$5.2 billion in corporate tax cuts and tax cuts for the well-off, they say to the college and university students, "You don't matter." The shame of it is, the Liberals in Ottawa had exactly the same answer: nothing for post-secondary education, nothing for students, nothing for the colleges and universities which are more and more the foundation of our economy.

The reality is that when you sit down and look at the education budget, this government is going to invest less in our elementary and secondary schools this year than they did last year. I know they made some announcements about kindergarten and they made some announcements about some other specialized things they want to do, but when you look at the overall number, there is no more money in the education budget this year than there was last year; in fact, there's a \$104-million cut.

What does that mean? I'll tell you what it means. In order to put some money into kindergarten, they're going to go to the high school level and take money out of there. They're going to go to the grade 6s, the grade 7s and the grade 8s and take money out of there.

Just to illustrate the point—this is from today's Brantford Expositor. The headline is, "Teachers Get Layoff Notices: Public Board Cutting Nearly 160 Teachers and Support Jobs."

"The Grand Erie District School Board announced an across-the-board cut to school staffing levels Wednesday,

slashing more than 157 teachers and support staff positions."

Support staff positions are special education assistants, to help kids who need help the most. This is not unique. The Keewatin-Patricia board sent out notices two weeks ago to their special education assistants, saying to them that literally 100 of them are either going to face reduced hours or they're going to be laid off.

That's what's really happening in education. At the same time that this government had these megatax cuts for corporations and the well-off, what they're going to do in education is take from the grade 6s, the grade 7s, the grade 8s and the high school students in order to make some announcement about what they might be doing for kindergarten students.

The announcement for kindergarten students means that you might actually reduce the class size by one. In classes that are already too large, reducing it by one frankly isn't doing much, at a time when investing in education is more important than ever before, because it is the foundation post of our economy. We now live in a knowledge economy.

I next want to turn to the environment. God knows, we've got some environmental problems in Ontario. We have the second-worst environmental record in North America. Only that hero of the right-wing rednecks, George W. Bush in Texas, has a worse environmental record. All I can conclude from this budget is that this government wants to overtake George W. Bush for having the worst record on the environment, because at a time when they had so much money to give away to corporations, what did they do in the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources, the two ministries, the two parts of government that are supposed to protect the environment? They cut another \$100 million out of the budget, at a time when we have some of the worst air pollution problems in North America. At a time when the amount of hazardous waste that is being brought into Ontario from outside has quadrupled, at a time when more and more illnesses among children and breathing disorders among children are linked to bad air, this government cuts, in a surplus situation, a further \$100 million from environmental protection.

That's on top of the cuts of the last four years. It means that the enforcement staff in the Ministry of the Environment—the people who are supposed to be out there protecting our environment, enforcing the air pollution rules, the water pollution rules, the toxic chemical rules—has been cut by 40%. It means, in the Ministry of Natural Resources, fewer foresters, fewer biologists, fewer conservation officers out there to protect the natural environment. That's what it means.

1550

Then there is the big announcement about infrastructure. But I want people to understand what the SuperBuild fund is. The SuperBuild fund is sort of like a 50% fund: 50% of the money is there, it's government money, but 50% has to be raised in the private sector.

There's a problem with this and I want people to know exactly what the problem is.

You see, the private sector will only invest where they know they can make a profit. Let me give you an example: Highway 407 is an example of SuperBuild, of how this government's SuperBuild fund would work. The private company bought into Highway 407 under this government because this government said: "You can raise the tolls as high as you want. There is no limit on the tolls. There is no limit on how much money you can charge people who need to use their cars or trucks to get to work or to transport goods."

SuperBuild isn't going to save people money. It's not going to result in the efficient construction of sewers and water or hospitals or schools. What it's going to do is cost taxpayers and citizens more money, because private sector companies, whether they be construction outfits or whether they be financing agencies, are going to want at least a 15% return on their costs, and 15% paid over a period, say, of 20 years is an awful lot of money. What this means is that people, taxpayers, citizens of Ontario are not going to get a SuperBuild, they're going to get super-taken, just as the Highway 407 is a super-take job for citizens who have to use it. People need to understand that.

Both this government and the Liberals in Ottawa like to give the illusion of helping modest-income families, middle-income families, low-income families. I invite anybody to look at the real impacts of this budget. This budget and the budget of the Liberals in Ottawa are all about helping out the wealthiest corporations, the wealthiest of the wealthy individuals at the expense of working families, at the expense of modest-income families, middle-income families, lower-income families.

Neither the Liberals in Ottawa nor the Conservatives here in Ontario have a positive, progressive strategy for how to sustain medicare. Neither of them. The fact that they are simply battling it out back and forth in these television ads is proof of that. My God, if one of them actually had a strategy, I wouldn't mind if they put forward a television ad saying: "This is what we're going to do. This is how we're going to ensure there are enough nurse practitioners. This is how we're going to ensure there are enough nurses. This is how we're going to change primary care. This is how it will benefit you." But they're not doing that. Neither of them has a strategy, so they can't do it. Instead, they just blame one another.

Neither of these outfits, neither the Liberals in Ottawa nor the Conservatives here, has a strategy for post-secondary education; has a strategy for our universities, our colleges, and our students. Neither of them.

Neither has acted to resolve the problem of child poverty, and child poverty has increased by 118% in Ontario since 1989. Child poverty is growing faster in Ontario than anywhere else. I looked in the federal Liberals' budget, I looked in this government's budget to find some response. There was nothing. At a time when Liberals in Ottawa were giving mega millions away to corporations and the well-off and this government was

giving \$5.2 billion away to corporations and the well-off, neither of them has a strategy to deal with child poverty.

Then there's the issue of affordable housing. In our major cities we have a housing crisis that is upon us and getting worse by the day. CMHC tells us that in Toronto an average two-bedroom apartment now costs \$1,236 more than it cost two years ago to rent. People's wages haven't gone up by that amount, especially for someone who's working for minimum wage or close to the minimum wage. This government takes pride in freezing the minimum wage for 5½ years.

There is a crisis in affordable housing and neither this government nor the Liberals in Ottawa has any strategy whatsoever to deal with it. Both Liberals and Conservatives say, "Let the private sector do it." But the private sector spokespersons have come forward and said: "We're not going to do it. We can't make a big enough profit building homes, building apartments for modest-income families. We can't even make enough money building apartments for middle-income families. We're building housing for people at the top end." What does it mean? The private sector is not going to build housing for lower-income families, modest-income families, even middle-income families. That's why we have a housing crisis and neither the Liberals in Ottawa nor the Conservatives here have an answer.

Neither the Liberals in Ottawa nor the Conservatives here have a strategy for child care. In an economy where more and more often both women and men, wives and husbands, have to work to put food on the table and pay the rent, this government has no strategy for child care. The Liberals in Ottawa, despite talking about it for nine years, have absolutely no strategy for child care. At a time when both of them are giving away billions of dollars to the corporate wealthy and the wealthiest of the wealthy, neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives have a strategy for child care.

But they do share something. The Liberals have been converted to the mantra and the Conservative mantra goes like this: If you cut taxes for the well-off, some of the money will trickle down to the hard-working people at the bottom. This is called the horse and oats experiment. If you feed the horse some oats, the sparrows might get something at the tail end.

It doesn't work. The reality of what is happening is this: There is a growing gap. Your tax cuts, the federal tax cuts, your policies, mean that more people who are already well-off are becoming wealthier and that people who are in the modest income category and the lower income category are falling behind, and that more and more middle-income families are having to work longer and harder just to keep their head above water. That is what is happening.

Let's be clear about what is happening currently both in the Ontario economy and the Canadian economy. Tax cuts have had nothing to do with the surpluses in income that both governments are experiencing. Read the business pages of the Globe and Mail. The Globe and Mail, right-wing piece that it is, doesn't fret about

whether Mike Harris does this tax scheme or that tax scheme or the Liberals in Ottawa do this tax scheme or that tax scheme. What they fret about is simply this: They ask, almost on a daily basis: "Will the economic boom in the United States continue? Will the Americans continue to buy up all the cars, all the trucks, all the airplanes, all the trains, all the pulp, the paper, the lumber we produce? If they continue to do that, our economy will continue to expand and jobs will be created. If they stop doing that, there will be layoffs in auto plants, in airplane manufacturing plants, in paper mills and pulp mills and lumber mills." We all know it.

Even your best supporters on Bay Street don't buy your line about your ridiculous tax cuts. Yes, they'll take the money. Yes, they'll stuff it in their pocket. Yes, they'll buy another time-share in Hawaii or the Caribbean. Yes, they'll take another vacation. Yes, they'll buy another expensive foreign car. They'll do all those things, but even they don't buy your hogwash that the current economic expansion has anything to do with your policies.

It has everything to do with the fact that 10, 15, 20 years ago the United States made the deliberate choice to invest a lot of public money in telecommunications, computers, the Internet and the so-called new economy. After they invested hundreds of billions of dollars of public money, taxpayers' money, to essentially start the new economy, thousands of corporations in the United States are getting the benefit of that. Citizens now get the benefit of it. They're spending like never before and that spending is overflowing into Ontario.

But both Liberals and Conservatives now believe that line of hogwash. I hear it from Paul Martin. I hear it from Jean Chrétien. I hear it from Ernie Eves. I hear it from Mike Harris.

1600

I want to be very clear with people across Ontario. What has made us one of the best places in the world to live—the United Nations has been telling us that for several years now. When this government refers to 10 lost years, the United Nations was telling us we'd become the best place in the world to live, with the highest quality of life in the world. What made us one of the best places in the world to live was that we were smart enough to invest in an efficient, effective, publicly funded, publicly administered health care system which is far superior and far more efficient than that hogwash of private corporations they have in the United States.

The auto companies will tell you that. Every time they produce a car or truck here in Ontario, they save close to \$1,500 per vehicle. They save it all on health insurance. The health insurance we offer under OHIP, publicly funded, publicly administered, is that much more efficient than the private for-profit stuff they have in the United States, an incredible productivity advantage. But you're withering that away. You're doing away with it. That is one of the foundations of our productivity.

What's the other foundation? Having a very well educated workforce. It never surprises me—actually it

does surprise me but they've done it so many times it doesn't any more. When Mike Harris or Ernie Eves goes to Europe or Ernie goes to Harvard University business school and gives a speech about Ontario's productivity, he says: "It's because we've got a very well educated workforce. We've got one of the best education systems in the world."

If it's so good, why are you cutting it? Why are you taking money out of it? Why are you under-investing in education when you know yourselves that it is the source of our productivity? Why are they taking it out? Because the money they've got to find for their corporate tax cuts and their tax cuts for the well off has to come from somewhere. It's coming overwhelmingly from health care and from education. That's what's happened.

I want people to know where we stand as New Democrats. We wouldn't be mailing a \$200 cheque to 70% or 75% of the people in Ontario. We would take that \$200, and collectively that \$200 would give us \$1 billion to make the thoughtful, strategic, positive and progressive investments in our health care system and our education system that we need to make. As a result of that, people across Ontario would be better off. They would be much better off.

We wouldn't be giving mega tax cuts to corporations on Bay Street that already have obscene profits. We would be making the investments that we need to make in protecting our environment. We'd be making the investments in affordable housing so that all people would be situated so they could make a contribution to the economy and a contribution to our society. Those are the kinds of investments we should be making. Those are the kinds of investments that would benefit people.

If I may say, rather than giving the wealthiest of the wealthiest another tax cut, we would raise the minimum wage. We would say to the people who've had their wages frozen for five and a half years: "It's time that you, too, got to share in prosperity. It's time to be fair. It's time to be equitable. It's time to be reasonable."

In recognition of my comments today, I want to make an amendment to the Conservative budget motion.

I move that the amendment to the motion be amended by adding these words into the first paragraph of the amendment, following the words "the Minister of Finance fails to use today's wealth to secure tomorrow's prosperity":

Add the words "and recognizing that the Ontario government's budgetary policy is a carbon copy of the Ottawa Liberals' emphasis on tax cuts over investment in health care and education"

So that the opening paragraph to the amendment would read:

"Recognizing that the budgetary policy put forward by the Minister of Finance fails to use today's wealth to secure tomorrow's prosperity and recognizing that the Ontario government's budgetary policy is a carbon copy of the Ottawa Liberals' emphasis on tax cuts over investment in health care and education, condemns the government for:"

That is my amendment.

I have to conclude by saying that at a time when the Liberals in Ottawa had an incredible surplus, at a time when the Conservatives here in Ontario have an incredible surplus, shame on both of you for only recognizing the corporate well-off and the wealthiest of the wealthy. And shame on you for abandoning child care, for abandoning an attack on child poverty, for abandoning affordable housing, for underinvesting in health care, for underinvesting in education and for continuing to cut the environment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Mr Hampton moved that the amendment to the motion be amended by adding these words into the first paragraph of the amendment—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Do you mind if I read the amendment into the record here without being heckled?

Following the words “the Minister of Finance fails to use today’s wealth to secure tomorrow’s prosperity,” add the words “and recognizing that the Ontario government’s budgetary policy is a carbon copy of the Ottawa Liberals’ emphasis on tax cuts over investment in health care and education.”

Further debate?

Mr David Young (Willowdale): One of the challenges when a government tables the sort of budget that we did on Tuesday, an excellent budget of this sort, is that there are so many members who wish to speak to it from this side of the floor that we must—and I am willing to—share our time. So, Mr Speaker, at the outset let me ask or advise you, if I may, that I will be sharing my time with the member for York North.

It is an indeed an honour to stand before you today and I am happy to have a chance to contribute to this debate, a debate that arises out of the budget that the Deputy Premier tabled on Tuesday, a budget that is worth talking about, worth reading and certainly worthy of widespread praise. And we’ve been receiving that praise from across Ontario, from taxpayers, from organizations, from institutions throughout this great province. Why is that? It’s because this is in fact a milestone budget in Ontario’s history. Not only does it highlight our successes over the last five years, but it sets out a framework for continued success in the future.

As proud as I am to stand here today, I do have some reluctance, and that is because I was not a member of this Legislature between 1995 and 1999. There are many who preceded me on this side of the floor who sacrificed a great deal in order to right this province, in order to turn this province around from what was, without exaggerating, the abyss. We were headed straight towards financial ruin. And many of my predecessors, some of whom are not here today, sacrificed a great deal to get us to this point, and I would be remiss in my remarks today if I did not acknowledge that and thank them for that, not just on my behalf but on behalf of the people of Ontario.

I heard the leader of the third party talk at some length about what he viewed as very similar budgets emanating

from Queen’s Park and Parliament Hill. I think what he meant to say, as I reflect upon it, is that he was hoping that Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien and their Liberal colleagues in Ottawa would have tabled a budget that did what the budget that was tabled this week in this assembly actually did. I think what he intended to say, and what he would say with some thought and reflection upon the matter, is that what Ottawa should have done is tabled a budget, as we did, that prioritizes health care, that allows for there to be increased funding on health care, a budget that understands that this province requires some significant funds spent on infrastructure in order to accommodate the growth that has begun and continues at an exponential rate, a budget that focuses on children and has various initiatives to help the young of this province, and yet at the same time a budget that continues to cut taxes. As you are well aware, this budget brings forward 67 further tax cut initiatives that, if passed by this House, will bring the total number of tax cuts initiated by this side of the House to 166.

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This budget also does something that has not been done in this province in decades, and that is, it begins to pay down the debt. For that reason, it is indeed a milestone in this province’s history and I am indeed very proud to speak to it.

Mr Speaker, this chamber that we occupy is full of partisan rhetoric from both sides of the floor, and undoubtedly we will hear a great deal of it over the next number of weeks on the subject matter of the budget. But I thought it might be of some assistance to you and to the other members of this Legislature, and to anyone who might be watching at home, to talk about what those outside of this partisan assembly say about the budget.

Let me quote from the president of the North York Chamber of Commerce. You will appreciate that that’s of particular interest to me because I am a representative from what was the city of North York and is now part of the great city of Toronto. Here is what Elie Betito said upon reviewing the budget: “Clearly the Ontario government has heard our message of implementing business tax cuts and has acted on it. Reducing the corporate tax rate to 8% by 2005 is a significant improvement and is welcomed by the business community. This should stimulate further job creation and expansion needed to maintain the growth in Ontario.” That’s what the president of the North York Chamber of Commerce had to say.

His views were echoed by Judith Andrew. Everybody in this Legislature at various times wants to associate themselves with small business, independent business. You know that Judith Andrew is the president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, quite an advocate for the small business person and a very effective advocate. She has come forward and said: “This is a bold and positive move. We’re just delighted to see that after almost 20 years the government has raised the income threshold for small businesses.” Judith Andrew understands. She also understands that the Liberals, while

they were on this side of the floor, while they were the government in this province, did not consider or act upon raising that threshold in spite of the pleas from small business. They further understand that the NDP took no such action, but she does thank us. And I thank her for her comments that clearly indicate that we are being responsive to small business. We know that most in this province who have jobs are employed by small businesses.

Let me also touch upon comments that were made about the cuts—one, by the way, of 67 further cuts, as I think I indicated earlier—we have made to sales tax on automobile insurance and on warranties involving motor vehicles. I'll quote from an individual who I believe one of the members opposite quoted from earlier today. It might have been the member for Scarborough-Agincourt who brought forward a petition that emanated from the Canadian Automobile Association, or perhaps one of his colleagues brought forward this petition. But this is the same source, and this is what he says. "This is the first time a budget—provincial or federal—reduces the tax burden on motorists. We asked the government to remove the special tax on auto insurance premiums and that's what it's doing. Motorists will pay less for insurance without the tax. The auto insurance tax cut tells motorists the government is willing to help ease the cost of mobility in Ontario."

That was echoed by Mark Yakabuski, who is the acting vice-president of IBC, the Insurance Bureau of Canada. He had similar comments to make about what is generally viewed as a measure that will help, in a meaningful and substantial way, motorists across this province.

Health care: When I talked about how proud I was about this budget, I started, as all should, with health care, because that is a priority. David MacKinnon, the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, said, after reviewing what we proposed, "Hospitals will be significantly better off due to more stable funding and a net increase of \$100 million over last year's operating budget."

The president of St Joseph's hospital, Cliff Nordal, said the following about health care after reviewing this budget: "There are some positive steps here, but we're still going to need the federal government"—I'll insert the word "Liberal," the federal Liberal government—"to step up to the plate and increase its funding for health care."

Dr Ronald Wexler, president of the Ontario Medical Association, said, "The government has laid solid groundwork for long-term solutions to the challenges facing our health care system."

Regardless of what part of the budget one turns their attention to, the result is the same.

Community safety is another priority of this government. It has been since we took office in 1995 and continues to be, and it certainly was in this budget. We have Vince Bevan, the police chief of Ottawa-Carleton, saying, "It sounds like a good-news budget as far as policing is concerned."

Toronto police chief Julian Fantino said, "Being able to be more effective with regard to things like, say, organized crime is going to give quality of life an enhancement at the community level."

The quotes go on and on.

In a moment I'm going to have to relinquish the remainder of my time to the member for York North, but I can't resist sharing a couple more quotes with you, if I may, before I take my seat.

I want to share with you what even prominent Liberals, right-thinking individuals in the community, are saying about this budget. Former Liberal MPP Bob Chiarelli, who I believe is currently the regional chair of Ottawa-Carleton, had the following to say: "It's a very good balance between tax cuts, debt reduction and new spending." As if that wasn't enough, Mr Chiarelli says, "I find it hard to identify anything bad in this budget." Pointing to the money Ontarians will save as a result of further tax cuts, Chiarelli is quoted as saying, "That's great news for young families and first-time home buyers."

I have more, and I hope I will get to share those quotes with members of this assembly and the viewers in the near future. Suffice it to say that I am very proud to support this budget initiative, and I look forward to hearing the remainder of the debate on this. As indicated by the quotes, this is a budget that all parties can and should embrace.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise today to speak about the budget that was presented by the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves. This is a budget that many said could not be done. It shows how much Ontario has changed in the last five years. Not long ago, Ontario was on the brink of bankruptcy. Ten years of mismanagement had created a situation of high deficits, high taxes, high unemployment and low morale.

In 1995 we campaigned on the Common Sense Revolution. We talked about fixing government, cutting taxes to create jobs, eliminating the deficit to create prosperity and paying down the debt to strengthen our children's future. Many people in Ontario were excited by this plan. There were also naysayers who said it could not be done. There were many naysayers who said it was not possible to cut taxes, balance the books and improve the services such as health care and education that Ontarians hold dear.

On June 8, 1995, Ontario embraced this plan—the Common Sense Revolution in 1995 and the Blueprint in 1999. Here we stand today, five years later. The plan worked. We were able to cut taxes to create jobs, balance our books, inspire economic prosperity and increase funding in priority programs.

Let me take a moment to outline some of the keys to this successful program.

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This budget contains 67 additional tax cuts, bringing the total to 166 since 1995. We are giving back to Ontarians more of their own money with a \$1-billion taxpayer dividend. That means that each Ontario

taxpayer will get up to \$200 by the end of this year based on 1999 personal income tax paid.

We are also phasing out our retail sales tax on motor vehicle insurance premiums, as well as repairs and replacements made under warranty, by one point a year until eliminated.

We are making permanent the land transfer tax refund of up to \$2,000 for first-time buyers of new homes.

We are cutting the general corporate income tax rate and the manufacturing and processing rate to 8% by 2005, which by the way will make it the lowest in Canada.

Something of particular importance to many of my constituents is the ability to convert the retail sales tax exemption for farm building materials to a point-of-sale exemption. This means quicker tax relief and less paperwork for our hard-working farmers.

We will cut the small business tax rate even further. It will be reduced from 8% today to 4% by 2005, again the lowest in Canada. We will also extend this rate to greater numbers of small businesses.

We plan to restore the full indexation to our personal income tax system to eliminate bracket creep. No one should pay a higher tax because they received a cost-of-living pay increase. A family of four earning \$60,000 a year would save \$195 this year, plus \$45 from the elimination of bracket creep. This is on top of the \$1,630 that this family is saving thanks to our original tax cuts and the 1999 tax cuts.

One of the features of our budget and the principles behind this budget is to balance the budget and pay down the debt. In 2000-01, we will give Ontarians back-to-back balanced budgets for the first time since 1942-43. Our new debt reduction goal is at least \$5 billion during this mandate, and this is up from the \$500 million that we promised in our Blueprint document. Most of all, I think it is important to recognize that earlier we passed the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, which ensures that Ontarians in the future will not have to deal with this issue.

Health care has been identified by our government from the very beginning as a priority item and it certainly received a boost in this budget. Health care spending will rise to a record \$22 billion in 2000-01, including \$100 million over four years to expand Ontario's primary care system.

We recognize that many hospitals are facing transition issues and to them we have added an additional \$235 million.

We recognize the importance that medical research and development plays in providing the best care for all Ontarians. To that end, there is a \$500-million endowment to the Ontario innovation trust, including investment in cancer research facilities.

For priority programs, such as cancer, cardiac and end-stage kidney disease, there will be an additional \$54 million, along with \$45 million to expand toll-free telephone health services.

In underserved areas, such as mine, there is a provision for a total of \$4 million each year for free tuition

for medical students moving to rural and underserved areas.

We've also committed to several other of our priority areas, including investing in Ontario's children by expanding our children's health initiatives, such as infant hearing screening, preventing and fighting eating disorders and addressing asthma in children, and the enhancement of the preschool speech and language program, with a \$6-million investment. We are also launching the \$30-million early years challenge fund this year to increase the learning potential of children.

One of the most important features for me in this budget was the opportunity to see the building of strong rural communities. As someone who was on the rural task force, it was of course particularly important to see the appearance of the Ontario small town and rural development initiative that grants \$600 million of investment to help share the benefits of strong economic growth across rural and small-town Ontario. This is the kind of thing that you can see has been the basis of principles that stand behind our budget.

We have proven that tax cuts create jobs. We have proven that you can balance the books, invest in quality programs and cut taxes all at the same time. The people of Ontario are the ones responsible for the economic success and for this budget.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Questions and comments?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm sorry, Mr Speaker. My understanding was that it was not questions and comments.

The Speaker: Earlier in the leadoff there wasn't, but there is on the other ones after that. It's the way this goes.

Mr Phillips: Fine. Just to comment on the two speakers, then, the first thing I would say is that, in my judgment, the single most important thing that has been driving the Ontario economy has been exports, and neither of the two speakers mentioned that in their remarks.

It was interesting today—the headline was “Claim of Tax Cut Boost to Economy Disputed”—that in his summary of the Ontario economy the chief economist at the Bank of Montreal, Mr O'Neill, when asked whether the tax cuts have been driving the economy, said: “I don't think they have been a major influence in stimulating the economy. If you look at the growth in the Ontario economy over the last five years ... by far the dominant influences have been the US economy and the exchange rate.”

I mention that because when you look at how the government encourages business to locate in Ontario—Why should you be in Ontario?—they say there are two major reasons: the quality of our health care system, funded out of public funds, accessible to everyone, and the quality of our education system, accessible to everyone.

These are the facts. The exports have driven the Ontario economy, not tax cuts—that has not been the primary driver of the economy—and the reason com-

panies locate and expand in Ontario is because they have access to a universal, quality health care system and a universally accessible education system. In response to the comments of the two members, neither of them mentioned what I and most economists regard as the most important element that has been driving Ontario's economy.

Mr Christopherson: It's interesting to listen to the government talk about their budget as if they were the first ones to ever create this sort of very lopsided approach to what to do with the economic boom that the American economy has given us. Yet here we have the Liberal Prime Minister of Canada saying about Mike Harris's Tory budget, "The best form of flattery is when a government is copying another government."

The fact of the matter is that while I appreciate and have some concern for the difficulty that this gives my counterpart in the official opposition Liberal caucus in terms of condemning this budget, the reality nonetheless is that it was Mike Harris who ran ads urging Chrétien to make tax cuts the number one priority—not health care, not education, not the environment, not the disabled, not the homeless, nothing else. Make tax cuts the priority. Harris spent our money, taxpayer money, to convince Chrétien to make that his priority, and he listened. Jean Chrétien came out with a budget that put two cents into new health care spending for every dollar it gave in tax cuts that will benefit the very wealthy. For every dollar the Tories put forward for tax cuts for the very well-to-do, one cent goes into health care.

There is nothing on the government side, and I would argue on the official opposition benches, to crow about. You have abdicated your responsibility to the majority of Ontarians with this budget.

1630

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): The continuing saga across the way is absolutely fascinating but bizarre. We have the finance critic of the opposition Grits maintaining, because Mr O'Neill from the Bank of Montreal said that tax reductions have had hardly any influence in terms of the economic agenda or the prosperity brought to this province—it's really health care or adjacent geography or whatever. If that is true, then one could argue the reverse: that the higher tax rates we had in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s actually were conducive to greater economic growth. If that is the reality you believe, then why has every competitive state throughout the world, whether it's the United States, the United Kingdom, France or—imagine—the British Columbia NDP and even the Saskatchewan NDP, bought into the concept of modest, limited tax relief?

Then we have the federal Libs in Ottawa, who maintained all along that a lower tax agenda is absolutely a bad idea for the economic prosperity of this country. If that is so, why did Mr Martin accept our advice and the leadership of the Premier in starting to reduce not only personal income tax but corporate and capital gains? What is it that the members of the official opposition believe in? You're either for lower taxes, which your

federal cousins are starting to move to, or you can both continue to foster and sustain a high-tax economy, which is where we were before 1995. What did it bring us? A mess.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I want to comment on the remarks made by the two speakers. Interestingly, they wouldn't point out that the Harris government has increased Ontario's debt by \$24 billion. The member for Willowdale read some very select quotes. He wouldn't want to quote the mayor of Toronto, who said: "Where is the support for public transit? Where is the support for affordable housing? We have a crisis in Toronto." We have a crisis in Ontario when it comes to affordable housing. The member for Willowdale wouldn't want to acknowledge that. You can imagine that if this budget had gone any way towards addressing some of those issues, and the mayor had given glowing comments or had positive things to say, he would be the first person quoted by each and every member of this government. But it did not. It rings very hollow.

We have an enormous debt in this province. We also have a huge human deficit. At a time of great prosperity, we have some of the worst poverty conditions we have ever seen. We have a crisis where people are on the streets. We have a government that provides \$4 billion in health and assistance, and a gift to the wealthiest, people who are doing the best in our society, but not one cent for the people who are the most in need, the most vulnerable, and not one penny for affordable housing in this province. That is an absolute shame. I cannot believe that any member of this House would not stand up and agree that these are important matters that we need to take action on. These are important not only to a socialist, as the finance minister said; anyone with a social conscience would want to do something about this.

The Speaker: Responses.

Mrs Munro: Thanks to those members from Scarborough-Agincourt, Hamilton West, Etobicoke North and Don Valley East who have responded.

I would like to make a couple of comments, particularly on the comments made by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, who has focused his comments on the issue of export and the issue of the American economy. I don't believe that anyone has ever denied the influence of the American economy on Canada. What has been left out of that equation, though, is the fact that in this province we've had growth that surpassed any country in the G7 for two years. That's looking at the province. When you look at the province and that growth, you have to look at what has made Ontario different. Very clearly, the political leadership we have had in this province for the past five years is the difference. We have led in the G7 for two years. The job growth in this province exceeds 700,000. That's job growth that is greater than in the rest of the country.

The member from Don Valley East referred to the selectivity of the comments of other members. I would suggest to him that he conveniently omitted the commitment by this government in the budget for \$1 billion to

be spent in the Toronto area over the next five years. That strategic investment is clearly aimed at making sure Toronto remains the vibrant, world-class city that it is.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Phillips: In entering the debate on the budget, I hadn't planned to get into this aspect of it, but one of the other members made some comment on it.

The first thing I'd say to the people in Ontario is that the budget is balanced, and that's great. Now, seven of the other nine provinces already balanced their budgets well ahead of Ontario, but Ontario has finally made it across the line, as did the federal government.

When someone says, "We inherited a tough situation," let me guarantee you that when you got elected the deficit situation federally and in Quebec was worse than it was in Ontario. But both the government in Quebec and the federal government balanced their books well ahead of Ontario. So I say to the public that we have paid an enormous price for the way Mike Harris has chosen to go about it.

You simply have to turn to the budget. You'll find, if you look in the budget, the debt of the province of Ontario since Mike Harris became Premier has gone up by \$24 billion. It has gone up by 25%. At the same time, we have had to borrow at least \$10 billion for the tax cut. I say that was the wrong way to do it. There is not another jurisdiction in North America that followed this route. Every other jurisdiction said: "Listen, let's get our fiscal house in order. Then we'll cut taxes." But Mike Harris said, "No, I'm going to go out and borrow \$10 billion to cut taxes." No other jurisdiction in North America did it that way. They all balanced their books. Alberta balanced its books, Quebec balanced its books, the federal government balanced its books, but Ontario decided to add \$24 billion of debt to the province.

Harris would say, "Well, I had to do that to stimulate the economy." That's why I go back and quote, among others, the chief economist of the Bank of Montreal, who said today in the paper that it wasn't the tax cuts that have driven Ontario's economy. He says, "I don't think they have been a major influence in stimulating the economy.... If you look at the growth in the Ontario economy over the past five years ... by far the dominant influences have been the US economy and the exchange rate."

So we have taken the debt up by \$24 billion. We borrowed \$10 billion for the tax cut, and it has not been the primary reason why the Ontario economy has grown so dramatically. As a matter of fact, on page 13 in the budget it says that 10 years ago exports in Ontario represented the equivalent of 29% of the gross domestic product. Today, the equivalent of 55% of the gross domestic product is represented by exports. So I say it has not been the tax cut that has driven the Ontario economy, it has been exports.

1640

The reason I get into this issue is because when the government of Ontario talks about why you should invest in Ontario, what things you should look for in Ontario,

they say specifically the reason you should invest in Ontario is this: "Ontario is one of North America's most peaceful and secure communities, and our remarkable health care and education systems are publicly funded and open to everyone." The document goes on to point out that in Ontario, US manufacturers pay on average more than \$3,100 per employee for the kind of health care coverage provided by Canada's publicly supported system, whereas Ontario employers pay about \$540.

So the very things this budget attacks are the very things that have been driving Ontario's economy. I say to the public, the litmus test of how Mike Harris has managed the finances of the province—if you want to look for an independent evaluation of it, look to the credit rating agencies. These are the people who are paid big money to evaluate the credit worthiness of companies and governments.

I remember Mike Harris when he was Leader of the Opposition and Ontario's credit rating was dropped by three points, from AAA to AA+ to AA to AA-. He was so angry at Bob Rae. He said, "It's a disgrace to Ontario." Five years later, Ontario still has the same credit rating it had under Bob Rae. Why is that? It is because Mike Harris has chosen to add \$24 billion of debt to the province of Ontario rather than get our fiscal house in order.

As I said, I hadn't planned to get into this, but one of the other members raised it. Harris or probably Minister Eves will be on the plane tomorrow to New York to try to meet with S&P and Moody's and convince them to change the credit rating of the province. After five years, surely we should see some progress on the credit rating. But it is incredible that after five years we still have the same credit rating in Ontario as we had under Bob Rae.

So when Ontario looks at the price we've paid so far for the tax cut, here's what I would say to all of us in Ontario: There is \$8 billion of tax cuts in this budget—\$4 billion for the corporate tax, taking the tax from 15.5% or 13.5%, depending on the type of business, down to 8%; there's \$1.2 billion of tax cuts on capital gains. Both of those are tax cuts that will reward, oftentimes, relatively well-to-do people. There's about a \$3-billion cut in personal income tax. Plus there is the \$1-billion gift repaid to the taxpayers. It was intriguing to me that some of the other governors have already moved on it: Governor Ridge in Pennsylvania has sent his cheques out already, I think, and Governor Ventura. Governor Harris will have his out, I would speculate—he'd love to send it out at Christmas.

By the way, we have a bill before us that says: "Here's what we're going to have to do. We've got to send out a letter to everyone, and it has to explain why we're doing this." That's going to be in the legislation. That will happen, and it may, frankly, be politically very popular. I gather Governor Harris has talked to—

Mr Hastings: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As I observed before, we seem to have a lessening decline of formality in the House. We heard the recent speaker say "governor." He is Premier. I would think he ought to say "the member for Nipissing."

The Speaker: I thank the member and all members. I apologize. I actually was talking with somebody and missed it myself. But all members will know to call members by their ridings, and I'm sure the member will adhere to that rule.

Mr Phillips: Thank you, Speaker. I didn't appreciate we had a lessening decline, but if it is, I'll take that as notice from the member.

The reason I point out that there is an \$8-billion cut in taxes is that you would think with that amount of money available for tax cuts, we could have invested in some of the areas where we clearly need to be investing. I said to myself, "I never listen to what the government says; I watch what they do." In the budget, there are probably 150 different specific things the government says it will do, but I always go to the numbers.

Let me take the first area of investment, and that is in our colleges and our universities. If you look at the budget, five years ago in that area the taxpayers invested \$3.568 billion. Today we are investing \$3.387 billion, roughly \$200 million less in our colleges and universities than we did five years ago. If you want to look at what virtually everyone says about how you build a strong future economy, as everyone says, it used to be that the economy of Canada was in its ground—its mines, its minerals, its agriculture—and now it's between our ears: our brainpower. That has been a shift. But why, if that is the case, would we be spending \$200 million less today than we did five years ago on our colleges and universities? Without question, when we can afford \$8 billion in tax cuts, this is an area where we should be investing.

I go back to this document, the provincial government's document on why you should invest in Ontario. It spends a lot of time talking about the quality of our education system here in our Ontario. It talks a lot about—this is a chart that says "Selected Tuition Fees in Ontario versus Neighbouring Jurisdictions." This, unfortunately, was three years ago. Since then, the fees have gone up dramatically in Ontario. It talks about the basic tuition fees being substantially better than in the neighbouring US jurisdictions. But we've chosen to change that, to undermine what I regard as a fundamental strength of Ontario—\$200 million less we're investing in colleges and universities than we did five years ago.

In our elementary and secondary schools—we've not talked a lot about that in the budget debate over the last few days, but the public may remember that last year the government said: "We are going to cut residential education property tax by \$250 million and commercial education property tax by \$200 million—\$450 million. We'll cut that off property taxes and we, the province, will replace it with grants." Well, it hasn't happened. If you look in the budget, you'll find that in the provincial support for elementary and secondary schools—I would have thought that we would have seen a line in there which would have indicated that our support had gone up at least by the \$450 million that the province had said it would replace in property taxes. In fact, the expenditures in elementary and secondary are far less than that. So in

the other area we talk about—investing in the future of our young people—we haven't even replaced the amount of money that was cut off property taxes.

1650

There's a good deal of talk in the budget about infrastructure and the need to build infrastructure, and that is absolutely correct. We probably need to be spending at least \$4 billion a year on infrastructure. But the province has cut support for infrastructure from \$4.5 billion last year to \$2 billion this year. What they have said is, "We'll find the private sector to step in and make that up."

I remind the public of the number one example of private-public sector partnerships that the government uses, and that is Highway 407. The government sold Highway 407. I remember it very well; the deal closed the day the election was called, May 5, 1999. The government got a—

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: Is this May 5 as well? It was exactly a year ago. Is this May 5?

Mr Caplan: May 4.

Mr Phillips: It closed a year ago tomorrow.

Applause.

Mr Phillips: Government members are clapping. The government is very proud of the deal. I say to the 407 users: "You got ripped off. You are going to pay for 99 years for a pre-election cash grab by Premier Harris." Without a question of a doubt, when the arrangement was announced—and the reason I spend my time on this is that it is the flagship of the Harris government's private sector partnership. When this was announced, they said, "Tolls will go up by three cents a kilometre over 15 years." After nine months, tolls for most hours of the day have already gone up by 4.5 cents per kilometre. The government said it was going to regulate tolls. We see from the owner that the tolls can go up "without limit."

If the government believes the 407 is a model for private sector partnerships, I guarantee you that when the users of the 407 finally get access to the deal, which has been hidden from them—it's a secret deal that so far we can't pry out of the government, although the investors on that deal have had access to it. If you are investing in the 407, you can look at this secret deal, but we the public have been refused access to it. That's the third area of missed opportunities in the budget.

The fourth area is the environment. If there's an issue that people are growing dramatically more concerned about, I think it is the environment. The low water levels are certainly a disaster for our tourism and shipping industries. Our plan to sell off our coal-fired electrical generating plants is a disaster. What have we done with the Ministry of the Environment? Once again, the government has said: "This is an area where we're going to cut spending. We're not going to invest in the environment." This was an opportunity to seize the future.

I'm proud to say that I don't like the budget. You may think it's very popular today. You may think people will thank you for \$8 billion in tax cuts. I will say to the

public of Ontario, recognize this: There is no solution in here for health care, no real improvement in our health care system built into this budget, and the agreement that the government signed last week with the doctors provides no progress on it. They can say, "We will go to the federal government and get more money." Are you saying to us that you're not spending enough money on health care? Is that what you're saying? If it is what you're saying, then spend it. If you're saying that we should spend more money on health care, come on and do it rather than the \$8-billion tax cut. If you think you should spend more money on health care, I agree, that's the priority. If you think that because the federal government didn't give you the money you wanted, you therefore aren't spending as much as you should on health care but you can spend \$8 billion on tax cuts, I want to hear that. What is the answer to that? Is it that we think we should spend more money on health care but we're not going to do it? I'd like to know that. I'd like to know that from the government.

So you still have not figured out how to manage the health care system, and one of the reasons for that is—I remember it very well—within weeks of getting elected the first thing the government did was to dramatically cut the hospital budgets. That was the start of an enormous problem in health care.

If you look where we should have been investing and looking to our future, tax cuts are fine, but fixing our health care system, investing in our young people and post-secondary education, ensuring that our elementary and secondary schools are adequately funded, making sure we have the right infrastructure, making sure we have enough resources to manage our environment—surely those have at least as high a priority as an \$8-billion tax cut. So go out, sell the tax cut, give your \$1 billion back, but I say you will be judged on the basis of what will be the quality of life in Ontario in three years. I think you've missed an opportunity to invest in the future, and I think time will prove us right.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I know the Minister of Labour is going to get up and say: "The debate is over. Tax cuts work." I heard him say that over there for a moment. I hope I pre-empted him on that.

I have to say that I have a lot of respect for the member for Scarborough-Agincourt and I mostly agreed with his analysis, but what he forgot to say, and I'm going to take this from an article in the Sun today, is that: "Paul Martin said Ontario's Tories ... copied the federal Grit plan—including eliminating the deficit and reducing taxes." That's what Paul Martin said today. Furthermore, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt slammed the Tory government for the \$200 tax giveaway that's going out in the mail to buy people's vote.

But what else did Paul Martin have to say? He said: "The federal Grits, looking at an election next year, may clearly follow Ontario in that area.... Martin told the Sun Tuesday he may give special surplus tax refund cheques to Canadians in future budgets—along the lines of the rebates of up to \$200" that Eves promised in his budget.

The member for Scarborough-Agincourt didn't tell us whether he liked the federal Liberal budget or not, but we got Tweedledee and Tweedledum here today. We'd like to hear, maybe in your summary, member, how you feel about that budget.

The fact is the Minister of Labour is smart enough to know that the debate really isn't over. It's going to be a lot of fun watching you guys squirm, if you're still in power, unfortunately, when the next recession happens in this province, to see who you're going to try to blame then. The debate isn't over, and one day you're going to see that happen and you're going to have to answer to the people of Ontario.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Off the top, I have a great deal of respect for my friend from Scarborough. I know full well that his position is—I've known his positions over the years when in opposition to the NDP and his opposition to this government.

In 1994, leading up to the 1995 election, we had a full and vigorous debate with respect to tax cuts, job creation etc. The debate was a good and fulsome debate. We had an election based on it. The member opposite I think is a little contradictory, because in the 1995 campaign document the Liberals offered up, there were tax cuts. There were tax cuts in hope of buying into the public, with respect to—now, they weren't as vigorous as the tax cuts offered by the Conservatives, I admit. By the same token, you did offer tax cuts at that time, suggesting that was possibly a solution to the problem.

1700

In 1999, with great respect to the member for Scarborough, not to mean to be too contradictory, you offered tax cuts once again as a solution to the problems facing Ontario. It is somewhat disheartening for me to hear, from a party that offered tax cuts similar to the ones offered by this government, that now this was not the route to go.

Further, the fact is, that debate happened. To some degree it's a time warp we're speaking about here. The debate took place. We had a vigorous debate in 1995. That process was carried forward. We went back to the people in 1999 asking them to endorse our policies as fundamentally the same for the next four years. They were endorsed by the people of Ontario. With great respect to the member for Scarborough, these debates have happened. It's something that has already taken place.

As far as the increase to the credit rating is concerned, yes, it's been stagnant. I believe this year it will be increased. You suggest it should be increased. So there doesn't seem to be a win for us, because when it doesn't go up, you're mad at us, and when it does go up, you're mad at us. There doesn't seem to be a big win for the government.

Finally, to the member for the NDP, I heard your leader say if he had the \$200-rebate cheque to give, he wouldn't have done it the way we did it. He'd have about as much chance of that happening in an NDP government as monkeys flying out of his nose.

Mr Caplan: I want to comment on the remarks from the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. He points out quite correctly that what a budget document talks about are the investments that we make in the province, what our priorities are.

Look at Ontario compared to our neighbouring jurisdiction. Look at Ontario and look at what every other province, what every other state, federal, both countries, is doing. Down in the United States and in other provinces they're investing in post-secondary education. You look at what Ontario's doing and we're spending less now than we were in 1995 on post-secondary education. All of our competitors—we are now 59th out of 60 in investment in post-secondary education.

If you think that our sister provinces, that our cousins in the United States are not clapping their hands with glee saying, "Ontario is becoming uncompetitive because its leaders refuse to recognize the investment that is required to ensure that not only competitiveness but prosperity are maintained"—it was a golden opportunity to be able to make a serious investment in post-secondary education.

It's also interesting to hear some of the government ministers prattle on. I can tell you that when the Harris government took over, Ontario's record on the environment was quite good. We have sunk from an excellent record to third worst polluter jurisdiction in North America. We're now second. I understand now that the move to cut the Ministry of the Environment is because Mike Harris and his Minister of the Environment will not be satisfied until we're number one, until we have the worst environmental record and the dirtiest jurisdiction in the entire North America.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm standing out of respect for the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. I do respect his views on the financial debate, the deliberations before us. He's probably more comfortable with the position his federal cousin Paul Martin has taken. I don't want to put words in his mouth. He will have two minutes to respond. I know him to have a good insight into the financial world and its workings.

The only thing is, I would say that he has been heavily influenced by a leader with absolutely no direction on the tax debate. He has had to relinquish that privilege. In the fullness of time, if you were listening to the member for Etobicoke Centre, you'd know he's been hearing you longer and realizes too that you have something to add to the debate.

I would put to you that in your summation you should respond to your federal cousins. Perhaps Paul Martin will listen to you on the debate on health care and increase those transfer payments and work with the provinces, especially the province of Ontario that we're all elected to serve, and try to make sure that we put patients first and politics last. As you know, several times in the budget is some reference to encouraging the federal government, whether it's the tax on small business or a number of other initiatives—specifically, the agricultural sector is one—to give Ontario farmers their fair share of the support payments in income stabilization.

For me personally, I always like to drive it down and I know that tax cuts really do create jobs. It's really quite clear in my riding. By looking at the economy and looking at the revenue, clearly by giving people back their money they'll spend it, and I'm telling you that when they spend it, they create jobs.

Mr Phillips will have the opportunity to respond, I'm sure, but out of respect I will be listening to what he has to say.

The Speaker: Responses?

Mr Phillips: Thanks for all the comments. The Minister of Labour says the debate is over. It's always fun. I've been on both sides and your IQ goes up a lot when you win and it drops when you lose. I just suggest to you to be a little bit cautious of the arrogance of government. I think the debate probably isn't over. I can guarantee that from our side it's only beginning. I guess when you're in government you assume that whatever good happens you're responsible for it and whatever bad happens it's somebody else's fault. So I point out what I believe to be the case. I agree with the chief economist at the Bank of Montreal, who says that—

Mr Hastings: One.

Mr Phillips: The member says "one." I was at pre-budget hearings and every economist said the major force driving the Ontario economy is exports. Now, you can ignore that and say, "No, no, no," and that's fine. But in the end truth will kind of win out: Who was right on this thing. If you accept what Mr O'Neill and others say, and that is that the exports have driven our Ontario economy—it hasn't been the tax cut—you would then start to look at why we have been successful in that area and maybe you would challenge yourself to say, "Maybe we should look at whether we are investing enough in the areas" that in the Liberal caucus's judgment you're not. I don't think we're doing enough in post-secondary education. I think we've got some significant problems in elementary and secondary schools. I don't think you've even begun to solve the health care issue and on the infrastructure I don't think you've got one good example yet of private-public sector partnerships.

So the debate isn't over from our side and I'll keep working as best I can.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): As the member for Willowdale said earlier, this is such a good-news budget that every member on this side of the House wants to join in the debate, and I'm happy to allow part of my time for the member for Guelph-Wellington.

When the PC government was first elected in 1995, the province of Ontario stood on the brink of financial ruin. Let's remember what it was like in those days. Even though I don't like to remember, I think we must go back to see that we're heading forward. Ontario's deficit topped \$11 billion a year. Ordinary families saw more and more of their paycheques taken away by wasteful government.

Interjections.

Mr Gill: A couple of my members are saying I must share the time with many more, but I'm sorry, I've only got 20 minutes and I'll only be able to share it with one good member from Guelph-Wellington.

After the 10 lost years of economic mismanagement under the NDP and Liberal governments, Ontarians had had enough. They elected Mike Harris and the PC government to set the province's finances in order and restore hope and opportunity in Ontario. Just five short years later, Ontario is back on track, thanks to our plan to cut taxes, reduce red tape and do away with the barriers to economic growth.

1710

Since 1995, our finance minister, the Honourable Ernie Eves, has delivered a succession of budgets that have benefited all Ontarians. I would like to offer my congratulations to him for the excellent fiscal management he has provided for this province. History will note him for providing not only the first balanced budget in decades but actually for two balanced budgets in a row, the first time that has happened since the 1940s.

Ontario's strong economic growth, with more people working and spending, actually meant that we had a surplus last year. The budget is now in its second year of being balanced, a whole year ahead of schedule. Minister Eves, I join with the people of Ontario in giving you our thanks. Under the strong leadership of Premier Mike Harris, Ontario is prospering again. He deserves our thanks for the courage and vision he showed in adopting the Common Sense Revolution, six years ago to the day, and spreading the Common Sense message throughout the province.

To the 82 Tory members of the last Legislature, both those in this House today and those not here, I also give my thanks. That of course includes you, Mr Speaker. You fought hard to make the changes needed to save Ontario during the days when every commentator and every special interest group seemed to be against change and were only for the status quo. You didn't turn away from necessary changes then and I can assure the members of the current caucus they are also not turning away from making those hard changes. That is my commitment to the members of this House and to my constituents.

I can tell this House today that my constituents in the riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale are ecstatic about this budget. It is a good-news budget for Brampton and Mississauga and for all Ontarians.

Fast-growing communities like my riding will benefit strongly from this budget's combination of targeted tax reductions with new investments in health, education and infrastructure. Why are my constituents so happy? Let us count the ways.

My constituents will benefit from 67 additional tax cuts in this budget. Now, that's on top of the 99 tax cuts brought in since 1995. The grand total will be 166 tax cuts in five years. Who could have imagined 166 tax cuts under the Liberal government or the NDP government? All we ever got from them was tax hikes and high

deficits. For the first time in years, Ontario's government is actually giving people back their own money to spend or to save or invest, as they see fit. The economic effects of this are obvious.

It can no longer be denied that tax cuts are creating jobs in Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr Gill: The member for Durham agrees with me, and so do the other people in this House. I'm sure the Liberals and the NDP will finally agree.

More than 701,000 net new jobs were created since 1995—701,000 jobs. That's 701,000 of our fellow citizens who are contributing taxpayers, able to support their families, to buy their own homes or cars, to invest for their retirement and for their children's future, to make the best choices they can make better than any government agency or any bureaucrat.

Ontario has seen almost 200,000 jobs created in 1999 alone, with the last two years being the two best years of job creation in the province's history. Economic growth in the province hit an impressive 5.7% last year, the highest in the G7 countries, and this year the forecast is to be 4.6%.

In addition to the continuing cuts to income taxes and the end of bracket creep, which helps every Ontarian, my constituents are very happy with several specific changes. As a riding of commuters, where a car is a necessity, the phase-out of the sales tax on car insurance is welcomed. People moving into my riding are happy to see the land transfer tax refund on new homes made permanent.

Hard-working Bramptonians are delighted to see that the government is giving Ontarians back more of their own money with a \$1-billion taxpayer dividend. That means each Ontario taxpayer will get up to \$200 by the end of this year, based on 1999 personal income tax paid. If this was Ottawa, that money would be wasted on ceremonial fountains in Shawinigan. But this is Ontario, where the government recognizes that tax dollars are the people's money, not the government's.

To ensure jobs are there for our children and for generations to come, we're cutting the general corporate income tax rate and the manufacturing and processing rate to 8% by 2005, which will make it the lowest in Canada.

The small business tax will be cut even further, and be reduced to only 4% in 2005—the lowest rate in Canada, if I can say so again. I know that Brampton's businesses will prosper with these cuts and that my riding will benefit with its share of all of the new businesses that Ontario will be attracting.

As a matter of fact, yesterday morning I attended my first Brampton budget breakfast with my local colleagues, Mr Joe Spina and the Honourable Tony Clement. The budget received overwhelming support from local business people because they know that Brampton will benefit.

To help investors of all income levels realize gains, there will be a reduction in the taxable amount of capital

gains from two thirds to one half over four years, starting January 1, 2001. This helps anyone saving for retirement.

It is vital that Ontario do what it can to fight the brain drain of talented young professionals to the United States. We all know too many people who have left because of high taxation in Canada. I call on the federal government to join Ontario in its tax reduction initiatives.

Allowing Ontarians to keep more of their hard-earned money to spur economic growth also allows us to increase funding to key government services such as health care and education, services that people rely on. We recognize there are new demands, including extraordinary advances in technology and drug therapy, along with an aging and growing population.

The government is acting to ensure that health services are in place to meet the needs of everyone in the province today and tomorrow. This budget will see health care spending rise to a record \$22 billion. One hundred million dollars will be spent over four years to expand Ontario's primary care system. We are providing hospitals with an additional \$235 million to help them continue restructuring to provide better services. It means more money for new hospitals in Brampton to meet the health care needs of my constituents. I was very happy recently to join Minister Witmer when we announced \$75 million for the new hospital structuring in Brampton.

To enhance opportunities for medical research and development, there will be a \$500-million endowment to the Ontario Innovation Trust, including investment in cancer research facilities. For priority programs such as cancer, cardiac and kidney disease, there will be an additional \$54 million, along with \$45 million to expand toll-free telephone health services. We will also provide \$10 million for a patients' bill of rights.

1720

As the father of two daughters in school, I know that no investment we make today will mean more for us in the future than our investment in our children and young people. We are expanding children's health initiatives such as infant hearing screening, preventing and fighting eating disorders, addressing asthma in children and enhancing the preschool speech and language program with a \$6-million investment. We want to provide relief for working single parents by augmenting the child care support benefit by \$50 million over five years. We are launching the \$30-million early years challenge fund this fall to increase the learning potential of children.

Class sizes for junior kindergarten to grade 3 students will be reduced with an additional \$101-million investment. Investment in reading programs will be \$70 million annually. Another \$70 million will be provided for early intervention and remediation in special education.

University and college students will benefit from a 50% increase in the number of Ontario graduate scholarship awards and an increase in the value of each scholarship to \$15,000. A total of \$1 billion is being invested to create 73,000 spaces in Ontario's colleges and universities.

We will introduce opportunities in new trades and modernized classroom training with \$15 million over three years.

We must ensure the best possible education system for our young people, to give them all of the opportunities that they deserve. Our economic success depends on every individual being able to make their contribution to the community, and for that, a strong education system is very vital.

Communities not only need to be strong and prosperous, they need to be safe. We are announcing several measures to support safe communities. We will make the community policing partnership permanent and increase funding to \$35 million per year. In fact, I can tell you that in Peel region we have one of the best police forces in Ontario, led by Chief Noel Catney. The women and men of the Peel police force work hard to keep our community safe, and we must continue to show them the support they deserve. They have a tough job to do.

Part of supporting our local police is making sure that when criminals are convicted they are removed from the community and, if paroled, are not allowed to return to a life of crime. We intend to enhance safety and security by establishing a new, \$18-million strict discipline model for community corrections annually, including 165 new probation and parole officers.

We will also address the safety of women and their children who have experienced domestic abuse with \$10 million annually, as well as another \$10 million to expand the domestic violence court system.

I can go on and on—it's such a good-news budget—but my colleague wants to share the time. I want to assure you, you ain't seen nothing yet.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): I am very pleased to have an opportunity to speak to the budget today.

I was excited when I got up on Tuesday morning to come to the House because, for many of us who were elected in 1995, we ran very clearly on an agenda to do our part to help turn Ontario around.

I have four children: Jenny, Jim, Dan and Greg. They were part of my motivation for becoming involved in politics, because before I was an elected member I was, quite honestly, like so many people in Ontario, heartsick at what was happening to this province. Several of our colleagues indicated that they were concerned we were on the brink of bankruptcy, and in fact that was quite true. Former governments in this province were spending recklessly. They were spending money we didn't have in this province, and they were building a debt and deficit that were robbing our children and our grandchildren of future opportunities for growth and prosperity in this province. That bothered me. It wasn't the kind of Ontario I anticipated when I was growing up as a child, and I did not think it was the kind of Ontario I wanted to leave for my children. Quite honestly, that is why I got involved in politics, and why a lot of my colleagues who were elected in 1995 got involved. So on Tuesday afternoon, when Minister Eves delivered the news that not only do

we have a balanced budget this year but for the past year, it was exciting and I don't think I've stopped smiling yet.

My constituents in Guelph-Wellington are very pleased about this. I guess the good news was not only having a balanced budget but also that we now have the Taxpayer Protection Act so that future governments will not be able to recklessly spend as they have. They will not be able to leave the crushing legacy of debt and deficit that we have had to cope with. I use the word "cope" sincerely. For those of us on this side of the House in government, the past few years have not always been easy. We have had to make some very difficult decisions about how to manage this province's finances, and at each decision point we were hoping that we were making the right decisions.

My colleague across the way spent some time talking about our debt rate. What he forgot to talk about was, yes, tax cuts—very important as a stimulus to our economy. But he forgot to talk about the jobs that have been created. Yes, we set about balancing our budget, but we also set about creating jobs, and our record now is over 700,000 jobs. We promised that 725,000 jobs would be created, and we're going to exceed that target. The member opposite conveniently forgot to mention those kinds of things.

When I read through the budget on the first day, I want to say to my constituents in Guelph-Wellington that there was not a page turned in this budget that did not speak to constituent issues that have been raised with me over the past four years, whether it was class size; the Ontario Innovation Trust fund, which my own riding has benefited from at the University of Guelph; eating disorder issues, which our own Homewood is a forerunner in addressing; investments in programs for small children; benefits for single parents or \$600 million for rural Ontario. People might think, "What does that have to do with Guelph?" My community is for the most part a city, but we have a great deal of agricultural influence in our city. Most producer organizations are based in the city of Guelph.

This budget is comprehensive and far-reaching. What particularly excited me about this budget was that it addressed immediate needs and is fiscally sound, but it also put in place things like reductions in corporate tax rates which are the kinds of impetuses that companies which are looking to invest, looking to establish, are critically examining around the world.

This budget is entitled, "Balanced Budgets, Brighter Futures." I'm very proud to speak in support of this budget, because I believe it will bring a brighter future to Ontario.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I want to comment on the remarks by the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. I found his comments that related to public transit and the need for public transit to make the greater Toronto area a better place in which to live and work very interesting—we've been joined belatedly in the House by the member for Brampton West-Mississauga, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

I found it very interesting that the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, the MPP for several members of my family, said in his speech that he liked what the budget did for commuters, and that cars are a necessity in that area. I think it's a really good opportunity to point out that this budget makes cars an even greater necessity and the likelihood that roadways will be even more clogged than they are now for commuters in the greater Toronto area, because this government has failed to seize the opportunity presented to them to make modest long-term capital investments in the GO Transit infrastructure.

GO Transit has presented a practical, workable 10-year plan. It is a plan which, if you make the capital investment, the operating dollars will be provided at the fare box with no ongoing subsidy required from government. Yet this government opposite, so lacking in vision for the long-term effectiveness, quality of life and viability for the greater Toronto area, has chosen to ignore what was the number one issue in a recent poll I saw for residents of the 905 part of the GTA. The members from that area stand up day in and day out and ignore the wishes of their constituents on this point.

We know from the mayor of Brampton, as an example, who has been very vocal on this point at the Greater Toronto Services Board, that Brampton is underserved from the standpoint of GO Transit. But where on the opposite side were the members of the government who represent that community? Where is their voice in saying to their government, "Put some money into public transit, because the citizens of Brampton require it"? He's silent on that point.

1730

Ms Churley: Let me dispel a couple of the myths—let me call them "myths" in this House—that the government members are spinning about this budget. Let's start with the comments on the early years education in this budget, because despite claims to the contrary, the government isn't spending a single new penny. Yet they make it sound like they are. The \$30 million you say you'll spend on early years programming is actually a reannouncement of an announcement that you made last year. You made it in last year's budget and you brought it back in this year's budget to make it look like you're doing something when you're actually doing nothing. To make it even worse, they don't even plan to spend that \$30 million now. They put it in the budget again, but they're waiting until the early years task group reports back in May of next year. Yet you're giving away billions to your corporate friends and putting out myths around spending money on early childhood education. It just doesn't wash. You're not doing anything new here; it's a reannouncement.

There was an article in the Star today, "Budget a Blow to Child Advocates." They say:

"The budget offers no income support, no social housing and no affordable child care to help parents get to work....

"Ontario is spending 13% fewer dollars on regulated child care than it did in 1995."

You haven't put any money into public transportation. It has been starved. Fares are probably going to go up again in Toronto, and services are going to be cut. No new money, no money at all for affordable housing, when there are thousands and thousands in Toronto alone waiting for affordable housing, for child care. You actually cut money from the Ministry of the Environment. It goes on and on and on. Let's get the facts on the table here and tell people who's losing and whose backs the deficit was broken on.

Mr Young: I appreciate having some additional time to talk about this very important issue, in particular the comments made by the members sitting on this side of the floor from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale and Guelph-Wellington. I should add that I had the opportunity of attending a meeting in Guelph this very day to discuss this budget. Just as the member from that great riding indicated to you and to the members of this assembly earlier this afternoon, there is a general level of satisfaction, in fact a great relief that exists within that community about the fact that we have turned the corner, about the fact that this economic juggernaut that was heading into the abyss five years ago has turned the corner and that we now have wonderful opportunities ahead of us, not just for us, not just for the people in this assembly, not just for the adults in the community, but in fact for the children. There is hope and there is confidence again. The people in that community, as did the two speakers on this side of the Legislature earlier today, understand that tax cuts played a great role in that.

I want to share with you one further quote, if I may, from a group that purportedly understood that as well.

Interjection.

Mr Young: Keep guessing, member.

"Rising taxes also kill jobs. Paying higher taxes than their competitors is the last thing Ontario businesses can afford. As for Ontario families, many can't afford the taxes they're paying right now." That quote was from the Ontario Liberal plan. That was 1995. That was then; they had a moment of clarity. Now, no vision.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I'd like to give a bit of a different perspective on what common sense means. I found it in an article by Jim Coyle. It speaks about it in this way: "Carlin Romano wrote a few years ago in the New Yorker magazine that common sense in any culture tends to be tacit, assumed, unchallenged" and that "common sense has over the centuries, after all, included the view that blacks should be subjugated, heretics and witches burned, women oppressed, and that the earth was flat, not to mention being the focal point around which the sun orbited."

Another aspect is from the Italian philosopher Vico, who "labelled common sense 'judgment without reflection.' Thoreau said 'common sense always takes a hasty and superficial view.' Somerset Maugham called common sense 'another name for the thoughtlessness of the unthinking, the prejudices of childhood, the idiosyncrasies of individual character and the opinion of the newspapers.'"

As I said, I found this perspective quite interesting because I have heard the words "common sense" mentioned often in this chamber. It also says:

"And, truly, there can be little doubt that the claim to common sense has, both in the case of some MPPs ... relieved them of the burden of thought, the responsibility of debate, the merest consideration of compromise."

I found that this approach to what common sense is would be a bit thinking out of the box of how common sense is actually viewed by some of the great philosophers.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Gill: Mr Speaker, as you realize, many members want to take every opportunity to speak on this great bill, and I thank the members for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, Broadview-Greenwood, Willowdale and Sarnia-Lambton, who took part in this debate.

One of the things the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale mentioned was he talked about the great mayor of Brampton, and he is so right. We had a meeting with him the day after the budget. He's so supportive, so happy about the budget we presented that he wants three members from Brampton—myself, Honourable Tony Clement and Joe Spina—to come in front of the council so that he can honour us. I know it's hard to believe. The reason he wants to do that is because of the environment of prosperity and hope that this government has initiated, where we are getting our fair share, and more, of the investment Ontario is attracting.

The member from Scarborough-Agincourt talked about credit ratings, that credit was A-, A+ or whatever. You talk about that to the people of this province, to 701,000 people who have got new jobs. They don't care about credit ratings. They want to work. They want to put bread and butter on their table. You talk about credit ratings to 500,000 people who are off welfare. They come home and they say: "You know what, family? I got the job." Do you think they care about the credit rating?

We are the government that is putting \$22 billion into health care, a record. We are the ones who are putting \$1 billion into infrastructure, the highways that lead to Brampton.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Smitherman: Mr Speaker, I'll be splitting my time with the member for Sarnia-Lambton.

I want to frame my comments in this debate in the context of my constituents. I want to talk a little bit about a balanced approach, because I think what we have here is an absence of balance, an approach which has led to parts of our community being conveniently ignored. The fault I find with this budget: It's a long budget and there are many things in it that any of us could embrace. I choose to find fault with the effect this has had on the plight of thousands of citizens in my riding, my constituents.

One only need look at the \$200 tax rebate to understand that there are now in the mind's eye of that government two different classes of people: There are taxpayers and there are citizens—mere citizens, it seems.

You see it clearly. The government didn't decide what it should do in the best interests of our citizens; they framed the discussion in the context of their taxpayers. This follows on the tradition of narrowcasting that this government established in its first term, which is to say that it not only makes good sense in an election campaign to focus on a strategic group of people who will support you but also to govern ignoring the needs of people who are not your natural supporters.

1740

I represent a very diverse riding and I'm proud of that. I'm proud that my riding includes many of our country's wealthiest people, individuals and businesses, people who put it on the line, who are entrepreneurs and who work hard every single day to create wealth. Before I came to this place I was a small businessman. I was an independent contractor and I continue to be a partner, not an active one, but a partner in a small business. That's the life I grew up in. My father built, from one dump truck, a business that had 100 power units, 100 trucks, and he's my hero in that sense. I invite members to come to my office and I'll happily show you the pictures there.

This government stops at that point of serving those people. I can't simply ignore those in my constituency who are not doing so well. Maybe to a certain extent that's the biggest fault I find with this government in general, and it carries over as well to the budget they have before us. The misconceptions fuelled by the speech to the Empire Club yesterday by the Minister of Finance continue to move along a myth that the budget did a lot to help people, but in fact the people at the lowest end, the underclass, many of the constituents in my riding, have been left behind.

I believe that this government, by its very policies, seeks to entrench an underclass in Ontario. There's no doubt that there are fewer people on welfare, and we should applaud the effect that there are more people working. This is a good thing. I don't stand here and say that it is not. But there are people being left behind. They're being left behind deliberately and they're being left behind by this government. The policies of this government are having the net effect of creating ghettos of poor people and all of the problems and challenges that are associated with that.

We have worked so hard in this province and in this country over time to measure the effectiveness of our government and our society not on the basis of how well the wealthiest do but on the basis of how well the least fortunate do, and we have lost sight of that. If members doubt that, if they doubt my sincerity on this point, then I urge them to lay down their partisanship and come with me, walk through my riding, spend a night as I did on the floor of Council Fire, a shelter that supports those people who have not just fallen through the cracks but who have added the cracks plastered over them once they had fallen through. This government has managed, it seems to me, to turn a blind eye towards people whom governments of all political stripes, through the history of this province, always sought to try and help. I think that's something

this budget has continued to do. It's a Tory tradition, and this government continues it.

What did this budget do to help the people at the Regent Park Community Health Centre at the corner of Dundas and Parliament streets in my riding? This is a beautiful new facility supported by this government but one that is overrun with people seeking assistance for their problems relating to addiction and mental health issues, a facility that is inadequately provided with resources to do anything about that. They do not specialize in these areas, and yet every single day health care workers in that environment are being asked to provide those kinds of services.

I mentioned earlier that I got tossed out of the House yesterday because I took some umbrage at the comments of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who is with us now, when he said that the effect of the budget was to do more for homelessness, and mentioned the amount of money the province is spending on its housing portfolio. It is a significant number, no one can doubt that, and it helps to provide some extraordinary housing and some extraordinary communities. I'm the beneficiary of 5,500 units of co-op housing in my riding, and the government on many occasions seeks to highlight the extent to which they believe it's an inefficient way to house people. But one thing there is no doubt about is that that kind of housing has created extraordinarily good communities and good neighbourhoods in many parts of my riding.

Here again I offer to members, who perhaps haven't been exposed to neighbourhoods like the St Lawrence neighbourhood where I visited last night to attend a meeting dealing with a threatened school closure, where we've got people of all income levels cohabiting, living together, sharing community resources, sharing the neighbourhood, that this is a model people from all over the Western world have come to look at and copy and replicate in their very own communities.

What did the budget do to help to create that stuff, to try and deal with the very real needs of those people who tonight will be crowding into Council Fire and sleeping on a cement floor with only one thin blanket? The budget did nothing for those people.

What will the budget do to deal with the absence and declining nature of recreational opportunities for youth at risk in my riding? Mr Speaker, you've been very good. We've been talking about trying to build hockey programs for kids in Regent Park and in St James Town. But the government, through its policies and down-loading to the municipality, has forced the municipality of Toronto to diminish the amount of recreational opportunities available, when we all know that kids, adolescents in that urban environment, are at risk and that one of the most inexpensive and sensible ways to divert their attention is through recreational programs, and those are in decline.

I've asked questions in this Legislature of the Solicitor General with respect to the problem in the city of Toronto of the declining number of police. The

government hasn't been trumpeting its own horn in the last few days about more police for Toronto, and I wonder why. They talk a lot about crime and safety, and I'm beginning to wonder whether it's fair to say that they just talk loud on crime and safety, that they don't talk tough, they talk loud.

I want to know where the money is in this budget, that healthy dividend that was evident the other day, to deal with the problems of murder and crack cocaine which are killing downtown neighbourhoods, those same neighbourhoods I commented on earlier that are at such incredible risk of being ignored by the policies of this government.

I believe this is further evidence that the government has decided there are some people, some underclass, some percentage of people who are just too much trouble to help and they turn a blind eye towards them. They've fallen through the cracks and this government has plastered over the cracks. Perhaps they stick cotton batten in their ears as well to ignore the real plight of those sorts of people.

I work for those people and I am proud to say that I do. I stand here whenever I can to highlight their plight. I don't do that at the expense, in my view, of supporting programs that will create wealth in Ontario. As I said earlier, I have a riding that is a great wealth creator and I am lucky to have that. I have in my own riding a laboratory, if you will, where I can take a look at wealth that is created and at the need to distribute that wealth in such a way that we can help those people at the bottom who are so desperately in need. Yet I wonder whether with all the government ministers who drive across the streets in my riding on their way to the 404 and on their way to the Gardiner Expressway, the window tinting which is generally designed so you can't look in has been designed so they don't have to look out, in the very same way too many people have found a comfortable way to cross over people who are literally on the streets.

In closing, I want to say one thing. The \$200 may turn out to be a very effective ploy. There are certainly people who will be happy to receive those cheques. For my part I believe and I'll be encouraging people to stand up and say, "I can't be bought for \$200," and to understand the extent to which that \$200 cheque is written on the backs of the underprivileged people and the people I represent.

I'm encouraging people who are watching today and my constituents to take that \$200 and contribute it to the United Way or to the Daily Bread Food Bank, and in doing so to recognize that we have a government in Ontario that has chosen to leave an underclass, to allow it to grow. In place of that, we need to restore a sense of community support for those people. I encourage people to take that \$200 and contribute it to the underclass, to the poorest people in our province.

1750

Mr O'Toole: On a point of order, and with your permission, Mr Speaker: I would like to recognize the alumni of the Forum for Young Canadians. Some of the members are in the visitors' gallery here today.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. The member for Sarnia-Lambton.

Ms Di Cocco: I'm pleased to speak to this budget. I'm proud to say that the members on this side of the House—from Scarborough-Agincourt, Etobicoke Centre and Toronto Centre-Rosedale—believe that the context of the debate—and this is where the context of my debate's going to be—is the quote in the speech that says a budget is "a deliberate instrument of social and economic guidance." In listening to my colleague from Toronto Centre-Rosedale, the context of that social and economic guidance is based on the premise that we are here to help the weak to become strong, the strong become just and the just become compassionate. That is the context that I believe our social and economic guidance should be based on. This simply means that government does shape our society.

The Liberal caucus and Dalton McGuinty believe in sustainable economic prosperity. Sustainable development is more than just tax cuts. It's about a clean environment. It's about competitiveness through a well-educated population. It's about affordable housing. It's about valuing culture and heritage, and at the heart of our sustainable prosperity is our medicare. These are the values that we on this side of the House believe in. This social conscience is, in my opinion, what is missing from this budget.

The opportunity to invest in sustainable development is found in the capacity to continuously improve and invest in protecting our environment. The track record over the last five years is that Ontario has become one of the worst polluters on this continent. What has the budget done to improve on this poor, dismal record? It's cut the ministry another 8% and the Ministry of Natural Resources another 18%. Remember, this is after the environment ministry is limping badly from a previous 50% cut.

There's a fundamental understanding in our caucus that the environment is one of the most important aspects of sustainable prosperity and the well-being and health of our communities. Why is it that in good economic times there's not even a small semblance of intent to improve or to invest in this ministry whose responsibility it is to protect our environment? Instead, we have \$4 billion that is going to be spent in tax cuts over the next six years to assist corporate Ontario, some of whom are probably huge polluters to our environment. As a matter of fact, by disregarding the importance of the environment we are directly jeopardizing our future.

The other aspect of ensuring sustainable development is all about competitiveness. The Liberal caucus and Dalton McGuinty believe that our best chance for competitiveness that goes hand in hand with sustainable prosperity is a well-educated population. Accessibility and affordability for students, plus increased investing in public post-secondary education, is how we develop a well-educated, highly skilled people in a society.

How does the budget deal with this? It deals with it by having very little money directed to operating costs. Our

primary, secondary and post-secondary education systems have been under siege for a sustained period of time, and this budget does very little to alleviate the hardships imposed by this government. With all this money raining down on the province, why is it this government is still attacking educators at all levels? These attacks are not subsiding. How can this government, with any conscience, speak of bright futures for the young generation when it has put education and the environment at the bottom of its priority list?

I only have a short time left to speak, but I must say that I want to highlight that the social and economic guidance provided in this budget is basically about privatization: privatize jails, privatize universities, and I believe we're privatizing health care by stealth.

Economic guidance is by advertising and pointing fingers. I would like to speak to this huge advertising campaign that has been in place, pointing fingers at the federal government. When words are used merely as an instrument of publicity or propaganda, they lose their power to persuade, and soon they cease to mean anything at all. I believe that this is what is happening in this province.

Good fiscal management is about balancing the budget and paying down the debt. On this front, the Conservatives have balanced the budget but they have balanced it behind seven other provinces and the federal government. But they have balanced the budget nonetheless; better late than never.

The other end of the spectrum is about the debt. But the debt, under the Conservatives, has increased from \$90 billion to \$114 billion. We are now in three digits. The provincial debt per capita has gone from \$8,000 per person in 1994-95 to almost \$10,000 per person in the

year 2000-01. Please understand that if we agree that the budget is a deliberate instrument of social and economic guidance, then this government has presented a budget that is unbalanced as the tool of its social and economic direction.

The unbalance is not just about tax cuts. Taking care of business interests is important, but good government is also about taking care of people development. Fiscal responsibility must go hand in hand with responsibility to protect the environment, the values of quality public education and to protect, with all our public voices, accessible quality health care. The provincial Liberals understand this.

Mr Caplan: We do.

Ms Di Cocco: We do understand this. All of this, in combination, is what sustainable prosperity is all about. Tax cuts are one aspect, and I must say that this government's mantra is unbalanced on that end. There is a whole social spectrum that is sustainable development, and anyone who understands what sustainable prosperity is about understands it's commitment to the environment, commitment to affordable housing, to education, to health care, and understands it's commitment to the underprivileged. This government is unbalanced.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think it's only appropriate that we recognize the Honourable John Nunziata in our gallery.

The Speaker: Actually, I was going to say that, and I was going to say his riding too, which I know is York South-Weston. We welcome him.

It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Carleton-Gloucester	Coburn, Brian (PC)		
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)		
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
	Minister of Transportation /		
Dufferin-Peel-	Tilson, David (PC)	London North Centre /	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Wellington-Grey		London-Centre-Nord	
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines		
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
	Minister of Labour /		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	ministre du Travail	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Hastings, John (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Guelph-Wellington	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Elliot, Brenda (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC)		
	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion		
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		
Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Wentworth-Burlington	Vacant
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Simcoe-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 8 May 2000

Lundi 8 mai 2000



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 8 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 8 mai 2000

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Today marks the beginning of Education Week across the province. For over 20 years I have had the pleasure and honour of participating in the many activities that highlight what is offered on a daily basis, every week in the classrooms in every school in the province. I stand today to proclaim what I've always known: The teachers of our province provide a lifeline to the future.

To the teachers of our province I say thank you. Thank you for the professional way in which you do your job. Thank you for always challenging yourselves to improve and innovate. Thank you for sharing your gifts and the art of teaching with us for the sake of our children. Thank you for sharing something that all too often does not get mentioned, that is, a thank you for sharing your love. Your love of learning and your love of the children are most appreciated.

From the first time a child learns to zip up a coat, to tie shoelaces, to identify colours and letters and to count to 100, you were there. The mystery of reading and writing was solved with help from you. You taught us to play fair, to share, think critically, problem-solve and much more. You bring light to dark areas.

Let us celebrate Education Week by expressing our appreciation to the teachers of Ontario. Let us celebrate Education Week by dedicating to be the best partners we can be. As parents, students, educators, legislators and communities we must commit to creating a climate of trust, respect and dignity for all partners within our education system.

Education Week represents what happens every week in the schools. Again to the teachers of Ontario, thank you, and you are appreciated.

VE DAY

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): This is the 55th anniversary of victory in Europe. On VE Day, May 7, 1945, Nazi Germany surrendered to Allied forces. Today we remember the

lessons of the bloodiest war in human history, the Second World War.

I especially want to recognize a dear friend and constituent of mine, Mr Frank Russell, who is just recovering from an illness. Frank Russell took up arms against the forces of Fascism twice, first as a volunteer fighting Franco in Spain, and then again with the Canadian army against Hitler. In two separate wars, Frank left Ontario to cross the seas. He saw dozens of close friends and comrades fall far away from home. In World War II, 1,100,000 Canadians served in uniform. Of them, 42,000 were killed and 55,000 were wounded.

Last week Nellie Templeman, a young Dutch girl living in Rotterdam at the time, wrote a letter in the *Brampton Guardian* thanking Canadians for their sacrifices. She said, "You paid the highest price for freedom—and you paid it in full."

Canadians like Frank Russell have never shied away from fighting for freedom. He is an example of those Tom Brokaw called the "greatest generation."

I congratulate Frank on his speedy recovery, and I urge all members here to join me in recognizing the sacrifices made by Mr Russell and his comrades in achieving victory in Europe 55 years ago today.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): It's with great concern that I report to the Legislature today that the doctor shortage in Thunder Bay continues to get worse. To say that the impact of this crisis is hurting my constituents is a gross understatement, and I want to use my time today to make a plea to the Premier to take some definitive action to deal with this urgent matter.

Last Thursday it was announced that the hours of access to the emergency department at the General Hospital of Port Arthur would be further reduced, largely as a result of the loss of more emergency room physicians.

This decline in services has to stop. It is becoming increasingly clear that this government needs to treat this as an urgent priority. Just 10 days ago Premier Harris, after some prodding, met with several area physicians in Thunder Bay to discuss this crisis. He indicated after the meeting that he had a better understanding of the situation, and for that we are grateful. But the fact is that we need to move beyond talk and into action in order to turn this horrible situation around.

Premier, you have to ease the restrictions on foreign-trained physicians who are keen to practise in the north. These doctors are ready to practise now, and now is certainly when we need them. Let's make the special incentives to practise in the north flexible enough so that they truly attract doctors who will stay. You need to stay on top of this, Premier, as there are decisions you can make that will help us once again provide the care that people used to take for granted.

It breaks my heart to talk to so many constituents who are no longer receiving the care they deserve, especially when I know and you know that the power to improve the situation is within this government's grasp.

JOB CREATION

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today because I am proud to say that since this government introduced its first phase of income tax cuts in July 1996, Ontario has gained more than 667,000 net new jobs. In April alone, Ontario gained more than 2,300 net new jobs.

Tax cuts create jobs, and I am pleased to learn that the leader of the official opposition agrees. In the Legislature on Wednesday, May 3, the Leader of the Opposition stated that his party believes "it is essential that we deliver lower taxes." He must have finally been introduced to Economics 101. He therefore must like the added 67 tax cuts contained in last week's budget. The budget last week contained a brighter future for all Ontarians.

Speaking of our future, it is definitely looking better for our young people. Youth employment rose by a reported 4,800 new jobs. That's 4,800 young people calling home to say, "Hey, I got the job." Overall, the unemployment rate for our youth fell last month from 11.9% to 11.4%, and this is the best it has been since 1990.

It was Edmund Burke who said: "Government is a device of human wisdom to provide for human wants. Men have a right that these wants should be provided for by this wisdom." The people of Ontario have wanted jobs and this government has responded to this want. Ontarians can rest assured that we will continue working hard to create jobs, because people want to work and pursue a better life for themselves and for their families.

LIBERATION OF THE NETHERLANDS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Once again this weekend our television screens and newspapers were filled with stories of huge parades and joyous celebrations as the Dutch rekindled their special and unique bond with their Canadian wartime liberators on the occasion of the 55th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands by our Canadian forces. As a proud Canadian of Dutch birth, I stand here in full realization that the opportunities and dreams of my own and my parents' generation could not have been fulfilled without

the tremendous personal sacrifices of so many Canadians both at home and abroad.

Over 7,600 Canadians died in the liberation of the Netherlands; the supreme sacrifice the Dutch, both young and old, continue to honour and remember. Many others were permanently maimed and injured, offering up their own hopes and aspirations so individuals like myself and others could benefit from the tremendous opportunities available in this country for a better way of life.

At least two members in this House besides myself were born in the Netherlands, Minister Hardeman and Minister Witmer, and we owe our reason for living here directly to these Canadian war heroes.

As one banner in the parade so aptly stated, "Dying for freedom is not the worst thing that could happen. being forgotten is."

On the 55th commemoration of the liberation of the Netherlands, let us also pay honour and tribute here in Canada to all those heroic men and women who so freely gave of themselves in that struggle to overcome tyranny. Let us never forget so that future generations, too, will always say of these Canadian heroes, "We shall remember them."

NURSING WEEK

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I rise today to acknowledge the beginning of Nursing Week in the province of Ontario. Nursing Week is celebrated across Canada during the week of Florence Nightingale's May 12 birthday. In short, Nursing Week is a celebration of the achievements of the nursing profession, the commitment of nurses to their patients and the dedication of nurses to delivering quality health care. Moreover, this is a week to increase awareness among the public, policy makers and the government of the significant and continued contribution of nursing to the overall well-being of Canadians.

The theme that will be celebrated this year by the 100,000 nurses in the province is "Ontario Nurses—Leaders in Health Care." Regretfully, it is due to the lack of leadership in health care that these are extremely difficult times for front-line care providers and their patients.

The cumulative effect of underfunding by this government and this government's general negative attitude toward nurses over the past five years has created many challenges for this dedicated, honourable and hard working profession. Government mismanagement has left the nursing profession struggling with staffing shortages and poor working conditions. In fact, many nurses remain fearful that they won't be able to provide needed care as demands on the health care system escalate.

As Nursing Week unfolds, it is essential that we recognize nurses for the quality care they continue to deliver despite mounting pressure. Let us also acknowledge, however, the urgent, critical need of ensuring that this profession receives the support it requires. I encourage the government to seize this opportunity, take a look

at this week and provide the necessary supports to the nursing profession.

1340

THORNHILL COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): On April 29 I had the pleasure of attending the 25th anniversary of the Thornhill Community Centre. The Thornhill Community Centre was the first multi-purpose recreational facility to be built in Markham, and consists of a twin-pad arena, library, daycare centre, fitness centre, community hall, lounge and meeting rooms. The centre, located at Bayview and John streets in Thornhill, also hosts trade shows, corporate meetings and seminars. It is the home of numerous Thornhill sports teams, including the Rattlers Junior A Hockey Club, the Thornhill Community Hockey League, the Thornhill Islanders Hockey Club, the Thornhill Figure Skating Club and their many, many collective hockey tournaments and figure-skating competitions. The Thornhill Golden Fifties Senior Club also enjoys the centre's fine facilities.

Like the other residents of Thornhill, I have often taken advantage of the multiple facilities of the Thornhill Community Centre. The mayor at the time, Tony Roman, was very instrumental in making sure a multi-purpose recreational facility be built in the town of Markham. In those early days the Thornhill Lions Club, a non-profit organization, spearheaded a fundraising campaign that raised \$250,000 toward the community centre.

I would also like to acknowledge the vision and the leadership of Robert Adams, the former Lions Club president, for his incredible contribution in the fundraising campaign. The success of this community centre is proof that substantial benefits can be derived when all levels of government work together.

ONTARIO POLICE MEMORIAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I was privileged to join with colleagues from the Legislative Assembly, police officers from across the province and the United States, the families and friends of police officers who had lost their lives in the line of duty, and members of the general public in attending the dedication ceremony of the Ontario Police Memorial on Sunday, May 7, 2000.

When members of the Legislative Assembly, on November 15, 1999, gave unanimous approval to a resolution endorsing the expenditure of public funds for a memorial honouring those brave officers of Ontario's police forces who had been killed while protecting our homes and communities, there was a recognition that the government of Ontario should, as the government of Canada did in March 1994, erect a memorial in honour of fallen police officers.

With the national memorial in Ottawa and now a provincial memorial in Toronto, the families and friends of police officers killed while carrying out their duties

will be assured that the people of Canada and the people of our province will remember their loved ones who made the ultimate sacrifice while dedicating their lives to helping their fellow citizens feel safe and secure.

As the MPP for St Catharines, I was particularly proud of the representatives of the Niagara Regional Police Service and OPP officers from Niagara who were in attendance and on parade, and the Niagara Regional Police Male Chorus, which joined with police choruses across Ontario to provide the musical voices that added so much to the ceremony.

Those of us who were present in person and those who were present in spirit were deeply moved by the solemnity and emotion of the occasion, and will never forget the sacrifice made by our brave police officers.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London West): As many members of the House know, May 8 to 14 is National Palliative Care Week. Hospice palliative care is aimed at relief of suffering and improving the quality of life for persons who are living with or dying from advanced illness. Hospice palliative care offers social, emotional and spiritual support to the person as well as their family by members of a diverse team which includes physician, nurse, social worker, home care planner, volunteers and other therapists.

The Canadian Palliative Care Association is a national association which provides leadership in hospice palliative care in Canada through collaboration and representation, development of national standards of practice, support in research, advocacy for improved policy, research allocation and support for caregivers.

In 1998, this House showed its commitment to hospice palliative care by passing my resolution on the subject. I am confident that significant progress is going to be made in Ontario over the next few years.

I ask all members of the House to join me in commending the dedicated professionals, caregivers and volunteers who provide palliative care to the Canadian Palliative Care Association and its Ontario affiliates, the Hospice Association of Ontario and the Ontario Palliative Care Association, all of whom are working to ensure the comfort and dignity of the dying.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, May 8, Tuesday, May 9, and Wednesday, May 10, 2000, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the sitting times of the general government committee.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that the standing committee on general government be authorized to meet on the evening of May 15 at Queen's Park and May 12 and two days during constituency week for travel for the consideration of Bill 68, An Act, in Memory of Brian Smith, to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

VISITORS

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd just like to recognize today the students and staff from Niagara District Secondary School who are here today to see the proceedings, from Niagara-on-the-Lake in my riding.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): It's not a point of order, but we welcome the students.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): Today marks the start of Education Week in Ontario, an annual event that has schools across this province celebrating the value of education. The theme of this year's Education Week is "Reaching for Tomorrow." In many ways, this theme captures the essence of what the driving force should be for a strong public education system in Ontario, a system that helps our young people prepare for their tomorrows, that helps them reach their own personal goals.

This theme also encompasses the goal of the work that this government has undertaken since 1995 to reform Ontario's education system. We are building the foundation for quality education in this province by ensuring we have a public education system that strives for excellence.

Last week's budget talked about Ontario's growing prosperity and laid out more tax cuts and key investments to keep it that way. Making sure this prosperity continues means having an excellent public education system to give our students the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in their chosen careers and as individuals.

I know there are many good things about our public education system. There are many excellent, committed teachers, staff, parents and volunteers whose dedication contributes greatly to the quality of our education system. But that dedication and commitment alone cannot do the job without a system that sets higher standards of quality that helps our students meet those standards and is prepared to be more accountable to the parents who depend on that system to educate their children and to the taxpayers who pay for it.

1350

Those are the goals of our government's education reform: quality and accountability. The education system we inherited in 1995 was in serious need of repair and revitalization. It was outdated. It lacked focus. It needed a new direction.

The electorate recognized the problem. The electorate told us that Ontario could not reach for tomorrow with yesterday's education system, so we developed a comprehensive plan for our education system, a plan that emphasizes quality and excellence through higher standards and through more accountability. It is this plan that outlines the commitments we made to parents, to students and to taxpayers in 1995, and again in 1999. It is these commitments that we are moving forward with.

In our first mandate we accomplished a number of significant things:

We established a fair and equitable way to fund our education system; funding based on enrolment and student needs, rather than on the tax base of local communities.

We defined, protected and increased classroom spending.

We renewed the focus on learning by bringing in more rigorous and challenging curriculum backed by standards and regular assessments of basic skills.

We established school councils to increase parental involvement in education.

We standardized and simplified report cards so that parents can clearly understand how their children are doing.

But we knew going into last year's election that the job was not done, so we laid out in the Blueprint, very clearly, the things that we would undertake in this mandate. We said we would continue to find savings in administration, where possible, and reinvest those in the classroom. We said we would continue to make new investments in key priorities identified by parents and teachers. To this end, in early March I announced increased investments totalling \$190 million in new dollars for our classrooms this September.

Again, in last week's budget we committed more important new funding: \$171 million to create new

reading support programs and to shrink class sizes for students in junior kindergarten through to grade 3; an additional \$70 million for special education programs—a very important increase. This, coupled with the increase I announced earlier in the year, means a 12% increase in funding for special education for this coming school year, an important investment.

We are also moving forward on another commitment we made to the voters by putting in place a code of conduct for our schools. We recognize that teachers can't teach and students can't learn if they are in fear for their safety. In too many classrooms in the province this is the case, so during this session we will be introducing the legislation required to give force to the new code of conduct I released last month. It will be another key step to make our schools safer and to create a more respectful learning environment.

To ensure that we keep our commitment on accountability to both the students of this province and their parents, we are moving forward with some other changes to make sure that school boards implement these necessary reforms. Parents have told us we need to provide more direction to the school system to ensure that students come first. The reports of the Education Improvement Commission have reiterated the need for greater accountability in our system.

It is our intent to act to close the loopholes that some boards and teacher unions have used to avoid meeting the government's requirements on teaching time for secondary school teachers. We want to ensure that the instructional time standard of four hours and 10 minutes a day, a standard that the government set two years ago and saw crumble over, is actually met.

We also intend to propose to give the province the authority to intervene in the interests of students if a school board is not meeting its legal and educational responsibilities in a number of key priority areas.

As the importance of education grows, so too does the importance of other activities in schools. Some teacher unions may view these things as extra, but parents, students and those many teachers who do participate believe they are an integral part of a student's educational experience. This government agrees.

In response to parents, students and communities where such activities have been threatened or withdrawn, it is our intent to ensure the government has the necessary legislative authority to ensure that these activities are not used as bargaining tools.

One of the foundations of quality education is quality teaching. This government and I recognize very clearly that Ontario has many excellent teachers. But as many other professions have recognized, in today's technological and competitive world, a top-quality public education system is not an option; it's a necessity. As a result, the need to ensure quality in the teaching profession has never been greater.

Students, parents and taxpayers must be assured that our teachers' knowledge and skills are as up-to-date as possible and that they are doing the best job possible. I

will soon release the details of our government's teacher testing program. Let me be clear: What this government has always said it would do is put in place a comprehensive teacher testing program, not a test for teachers.

Our government has consistently laid out for the voters our agenda for comprehensive and long overdue changes in our education system. We promised students, parents and taxpayers that we would undertake the reforms necessary to ensure quality and accountability so that our public education system would better prepare our students for their tomorrows. Much has been accomplished, but much more needs to be done.

Today is the start of Education Week. I and my caucus colleagues are once again pledging our commitment to ensure that our students can indeed reach for their tomorrows through a strong public education system. Our students deserve no less.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Making our communities safer is one of this government's top priorities. People are justifiably concerned about crime. Violent youth crime increased 77% between 1988 and 1998, which is the most recent year for which we have statistics. Parents are fearful for the safety of their families, especially their children.

Ottawa's response to this situation has been woefully inadequate. The federal Liberal government is not listening to the concerns of the people of Ontario. I say that because Ottawa has ignored Ontario in their deliberations on the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the so-called replacement for the Young Offenders Act. Unfortunately, what the Liberals are proposing is the same book, but with a new cover.

Earlier this year I, along with my colleagues the Solicitor General and the Minister of Correctional Services, asked to appear before the federal standing committee on justice and human rights, which is considering this new bill. We were refused. The co-chairs of the Ontario Crime Commission also asked to appear before the standing committee. They too were refused.

It wasn't just the government of Ontario that was denied the opportunity to speak to the federal government; it was the people of Ontario who were denied a voice, denied the opportunity to deliver their serious concerns about an important piece of legislation.

1400

I understand that a number of amendments are being proposed to the Youth Criminal Justice Act in response to Quebec's concerns. Our government is concerned that these changes do not even come close to improving this legislation. In fact, these changes could weaken the act by softening the language. We are concerned that this federal bill will not increase jail sentences; will not automatically try 16- and 17-year-olds as adults when they commit adult crimes; will not require mandatory jail time for youth convicted of offences involving weapons; will

not guarantee that youth convicted of serious crimes such as murder will serve adult sentences; and will still force prosecutors to prove that an adult sentence is necessary for most serious violent offences.

The proposed Youth Criminal Justice Act fails to hold young offenders accountable for their actions. Consequently, the federal government is failing to protect Canadians from violent young offenders. They have not opened their eyes to the problem, and they won't listen to the public's concerns or to the people's elected representatives.

If this federal bill is passed, Ontario will be required to enforce the legislation even though they ignored all of our major suggestions for making it more effective. Clearly this is unfair and unjust. The issue is too important to the people of Ontario for us to give up on. That's why today I am tabling the following resolution:

Resolved that the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario,

(a) Condemns the weakness of the current federal Young Offenders Act and urges that it be scrapped and replaced with a tough new law that holds young offenders accountable for their actions;

(b) Rejects the changes proposed by federal Bill C-3 because they do not go far enough to address the concerns of law-abiding citizens but merely repackage the flawed, weak Young Offenders Act under a new name;

(c) Further rejects any proposed amendments to Bill C-3 that would weaken and soften legislation that is already inadequate;

(d) Particularly condemns the federal government's attempt, through its legislation, to shorten some jail sentences for crimes committed by young offenders;

(e) Believes the 16- and 17-year-old persons charged with serious, adult-type offences should automatically be tried as adults; and

(f) Believes that young people convicted of violent, adult-type crimes should be subject to adult-length sentences.

I call on all members to speak up and speak loudly so that Ottawa will hear that the people of Ontario want youth crime legislation with teeth.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): The Attorney General asks all members to speak up and speak loudly. If only the pen were mightier than the sword when it comes to crime, if only fighting justice were about speaking up and speaking loudly, then we wouldn't have a problem with the safety of our streets here in Ontario. If only our job here was to blame everybody else for crime but ourselves, then in fact maybe there wouldn't be any problems with the safety of our streets here in Ontario.

But I've got some news for the government. Fighting justice is not just about the grandstanding and the speeches and the resolution. Fighting justice is about doing something, and I can tell you, notwithstanding all the noise and deflection and blame that this government would like to pass on to Ottawa, I can assure you that there is some business to be done in this House when it comes to crime.

If this government was serious about justice, they wouldn't be before the Supreme Court of Canada trying to shoot down gun control legislation alongside the gun lobby. If this government was serious about justice, they wouldn't have put guns in the hands of 12-year-olds, against the advice of victims. If this government was serious about justice, they would take seriously those constructive proposals such as the private member's bill to get phony guns off our streets that was so arrogantly dismissed by this minister.

There's more that this House can do. This House could pass legislation mandating trigger locks, going after the gun manufacturers for what they've done in terms of the economic and health costs. Instead, this government is in the holster of the gun lobby and is trying to distract Ontarians by pointing up to Ottawa, but nobody is going to be fooled in this House, I can assure the Ontario Attorney General.

If this government was serious about justice, they would be making investments in enforcement. Do you know how many young offenders were tried in Ontario as adults in 1997-98? In Manitoba, it was 23; in Quebec, it was 23; in Ontario, it was nine. So if the Attorney General has a problem with the number of youth being tried as adults, I suggest he stop talking about it and start doing something about it.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The Minister of Education's statement today is clearly about a government that doesn't trust or respect the school boards or teachers across Ontario. Clearly, their idea of a fair and equitable way of funding is to underfund everybody—every board at every level. Class sizes in Ontario have grown. Without a doubt, special education children have been forgotten because of this government. Clearly and without a doubt, schools have closed in unprecedented proportions across the province over the course of the last three years. It is evident that this government has not listened to its own experts, because junior kindergarten and early childhood education programs have been decimated because this government doesn't believe an investment in early childhood education is an investment in the future.

Let's not get sucked in by our theme about building for tomorrow. This government has tried to wreak havoc on tomorrow at the expense of the education system in the province of Ontario. Do you know what has kept this system together? It has been the teachers in Ontario who, over the course of the last five years, have been rallied against by this government. But the teachers haven't listened to the government. They've decided to be dedicated, they've decided to be committed and they've decided that love of students, love of their children and love of their profession are certainly a lot better than buying into this government's agenda to wreak havoc and to Americanize our public education system. You know what? This will not happen, because the teachers in

Ontario are committed. They're dedicated, they love the system, they love their students.

Trustees—those same trustees who you over the course of the last five years have said have not done their job—have fought at the local level to save the local identity of schools so that truly the schools across the province are schools with a difference and reflect the local flavour of the community. You people do not understand it yet. You haven't got the idea. One size does not fit all. You people are guilty of destroying the public education system in Ontario.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I couldn't help observing how this minister was very smug and smooth and sugary. To the unsuspecting electorate, she'd almost be convincing if it weren't for a number of different facts that I'm going to try to lay out in the few minutes I've got.

Bill 160 was designed to squeeze money out of the education system. It was designed to suck money out of our schools into the coffers of the provincial government to give the tax cuts they've been giving for years. That's what it's all about.

Some of you fine Tories who go to your schools, if you do enter them from time to time, will have noticed that you've made cuts in adult education, you've made cuts in education assistants, you have now more extra user fees in our elementary and secondary system than ever before. We now have fewer library teachers than ever before. We now have fewer custodians in our schools than ever before. Art programs have been cut; teachers of art have been cut. The list is exhausting, but here is a lot more that could be said about it.

This minister says, "We established a fair and equitable way to fund our education system." Yes, you have whacked everybody fairly, and in fact you have whacked the teaching system equitably in the public and Catholic systems. That you have done.

You say, "We defined, protected and increased classroom spending." Listen to this study. A study issued this month by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario demonstrates that since 1997, class sizes in elementary schools have increased significantly, from 0.2 to 23.1 in kindergarten alone; from 22.1 to 24 in grade 2. In other words, there are more students and fewer teachers in our classrooms, and that's why you're making this pitiful attempt to put back a couple of teachers before people notice.

In special ed you added \$40 million a couple of months ago and you added \$100 million just recently. Why? Because you knew there was money to be put in special ed, but you, Minister, denied it all along. Every time we raised that question, you denied there was a problem in special ed, until you were caught, and now you have to put in a few dollars. But you don't say, "We acknowledge it was a problem." You have to deny it. I have to tell you that teachers are demoralized; parents are fundraising now more than ever before. We have a system in crisis, and unless the parents fix this, you're going to bring us into further crisis.

1410

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Attorney General: Forgive me for being somewhat skeptical about the sincerity of this government when it comes to issues of crime and prevention of crime and indeed the interests of victims. Has this government not lived with their zero Victims' Bill of Rights, the Victims' Bill of Rights that the courts in this province told us a year ago had no impact whatsoever on the rights of victims, wasn't worth the paper it was written on?

My skepticism is fuelled by a government that wants to talk a big game about law and order and crime control yet, when it has the capacity to do something, passes legislation that will go out busting squeegee kids trying to earn a couple of bucks on the streets of Toronto because of their poverty and destitution; a government that, rather than addressing the needs of families who are crippled and troubled and torn apart by a delinquent child, rather than providing them with the community supports, mental health programs for youngsters and for adolescents, rather than providing their schools and high schools and other parts of the educational system with those supports that could help get delinquent kids back on track, wants to hold parents responsible, even though they've expended, in most cases, tens of thousands of dollars and even though their families have been impacted in the most serious way by a delinquent kid; this government that chooses to privatize not only its adult but now all of its young offender facilities.

This government doesn't have the power to write criminal legislation; we understand that. But in those areas where they do have jurisdiction, they have failed the community in terms of public safety, they've failed victims, and they've failed those young people who find themselves in trouble with the law.

I'm looking forward to the debate on this resolution. I quite frankly can tell you that we share some of the concerns that the vast majority of Ontarians have about how young people are being dealt with in our criminal justice system. But this government abandons its role in the treatment and rehabilitation of young offenders, turns them over to for-profit American corporate boot camps, which have no impact other than to lock them up and throw the key away, not understanding that sooner or later they're going to get out. Let's debate this resolution and let's talk about this government's failure to enact any programs regarding community safety.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question today is for the Chair of Management

Board. I want to return to the sorry saga of the Tory land scam. I want to have a page bring to you a copy of a mortgage given back to a buyer in connection with a particular deal. You sold some land on April 30, 1999, for \$13.27 million. When it came to this deal, you decided you were going to play banker. So you gave a mortgage back; you loaned \$10.77 million to the buyer.

The interesting thing is that when it came to interest to be charged on this loan for the first 18 months, do you know what you charged this buyer? Given that prime at the time was 6.5%, do you know what this minister charged this buyer in connection with a loan for \$10.77 million? Zero. Not a penny in interest. That works out to a cost of \$1 million for Ontario taxpayers.

Minister, tell us, why was this \$1-million expense in the interests of Ontario taxpayers?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): As the Leader of the Opposition knows, there is an investigation underway into the past transactions at the Ontario Realty Corp. I would caution him that some of these deals, although they might not have closed till 1999, might have been entered into years ago. I don't know the details on this particular one, but I can tell you there's a board of directors of the Ontario Realty Corp which is accountable for their actions and, second, we have done the right thing by trying to get to the bottom of all past transactions by having an investigation take place. It's being conducted by people who are knowledgeable and competent and capable of carrying out this full investigation.

Mr McGuinty: Oh, we know; you've told us several times before, Minister, that you are nothing less than a saint when it comes to these matters.

I want to remind you: It says here that the person who loaned this money—you'll find it in section 14 of this mortgage—"Her Majesty the Queen in right of Ontario as represented by the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet." This is your deal. That's you. You can't now pretend that you know nothing about this and that you take no responsibility for this matter.

Let me tell you something else about this deal. The buyer in this matter was Mavis Valley Developments and the president there is Nick Cortellucci. It turns out that since 1995, Mr Cortellucci and his business partners have made 342 donations to the Mike Harris party here in Ontario. That works out to \$463,000 in contributions to this minister's party. This is another special deal for another special friend. This is a case of this government looking after those that bring ya to the dance. We've got a \$1-million discount given to one of your largest contributors.

Again I ask, Minister, how is this deal in the interests of Ontario taxpayers?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As the Leader of the Opposition preaches in his sanctimonious tone to this House, he should be aware that we are doing the proper thing. We don't share the luxury you have in opposition to slander and carry on with all your mudslinging, but we can tell you this: We are doing the proper thing to get to the

bottom of these important questions. We've asked for the auditors. They have asked for forensic auditors, people who are qualified to look at past transactions, and they have called in the police who, you are well aware, are investigating past transactions.

Mr McGuinty: Our concern on this side of the House is that this minister failed to do the proper thing before entering into these deals. It's not a matter now of closing the barn door after the horses have escaped. Why didn't you do the right thing before you entered into this deal?

Although it's hard to imagine, this deal gets worse. There is a special provision in this loan that gives the buyer a 7% discount on the cost of the loan. That provision in and of itself will save this buyer \$753,900. If you add up all the special deals, all the special clauses, something the likes of which nobody could possibly imagine being part of a usual arm's-length commercial transaction, Minister, this buyer gets a total discount of \$2,251,000.

We have searched the Common Sense Revolution, we have looked at all the party documents, and there is no reference anywhere to a political rewards program where you reward those friends who make contributions to you and your government. Why don't you just stand up and tell us now why you didn't put it before the Ontario public at the time of the last election? Why didn't you tell us you intended to—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Chair of Management Board.

Hon Mr Hodgson: To the Leader of the Opposition, maybe you could answer this for the House and for those watching on TV: Do you think you're more qualified than the police to investigate these past transactions or do you just not trust the police?

Interjections.

The Speaker: New question.

1420

Mr McGuinty: Minister, this deal was made on April 30, 1999. That's when it closed. It involves a loan from you, in your capacity as Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, for \$10.77 million, and it provides for 18 months interest-free.

Tell me, Minister, have you ever heard of such a deal in your life: \$11 million, 18 months interest-free? Do you support this deal? Do you think this is a good thing? Do you think this in the interests of Ontario taxpayers? Just answer those questions.

Hon Mr Hodgson: As the people of Ontario know, real estate deals sometimes are complicated. He mentions the deal. I don't have the particulars of when it was entered into or when it wasn't. I know the closing date because he has handed me this piece of paper.

I can tell you that this government is being open. We've asked for the auditors and the forensic auditors, people who are qualified, to look at these things, and they've asked for the police to investigate all past transactions. We want to get to the bottom of these issues, and that's the proper process to be undertaking. I hope he is not suggesting that they are not qualified,

because they are, and they are conducting an investigation that he is well aware of.

Mr McGuinty: This is one of the largest ORC deals struck in the last three years. This buyer is one of the largest two donors to your party: 342 donations made to your party during the last five years. The total donations again are \$463,000. The total loss to the taxpayers here in connection with this deal is \$2,251,000.

This all happened on your watch. You tell us that you're trying to get to the bottom of this. Our concern over here is that you're at the bottom of this. So tell us one more time: Why is it in the interests of Ontario taxpayers that somebody who contributed \$463,000 to your party should obtain a loan discount of \$2,251,000?

Hon Mr Hodgson: We are going to get to the bottom of all these questions through the proper process, and the police are involved in investigating it. He asked if this was a deal that served the taxpayers well. We don't know, but we will find out in terms of the proper process through the police.

I can tell you that your record on land deals and what is proven fact for all to see—a proven fact, not an allegation—is the Ataratiri lands, where the Liberals, when they were in power, cost Ontario taxpayers \$340 million. That's a proven fact of your mismanagement when it comes to lands.

Mr McGuinty: This minister just utters words which tell us more than anything else about his connection with this matter. I asked him whether this is in the interests of Ontario taxpayers. This minister, whose office appears on this document in connection with one of the largest deals in the last two years, tells us he doesn't know whether this is in the interests of Ontario taxpayers. That says more than anything else about the state of this government and their refusal to assume responsibility for the people who sent them here in the first place, Ontario taxpayers.

One more time, Minister: How could it possibly be, a deal this large, a sale to a contributor that large involving his many millions of taxpayer dollars? How could this happen on your watch? Why will you not stand up now and take responsibility for this and finally do the right thing, which is step aside?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Everyone in this House should know or ought to know that this government, the Mike Harris government, is taking the proper steps. You want to blame the whistle-blowers. We have put in place a process to get to the bottom of all these past transactions to make sure they served the interests of the taxpayers. If there has been wrongdoing, that will be accounted for through due process. That's the responsible thing to do. That's a responsibility we have to the taxpayers. We don't have the luxury that you have in opposition to act responsibly and throw around accusations.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. I want to return to

your government's discrimination against cancer patients from northern Ontario.

Today in the gallery is a cancer survivor, Anna Watson. Last year, Anna Watson made 11 trips to the cancer treatment centre in Thunder Bay. Because your government doesn't provide assistance in terms of air travel, she had to drive four hours to the cancer treatment centre, receive treatment and drive four hours home. She estimates that she and her husband have had to pay \$1,000 a month out of their own pocket to access cancer treatment.

If Anna Watson were from southern Ontario, you'd pay the full air fare, the taxis, the hotel room, the food, everything, to take a cancer patient from southern Ontario to the same treatment centre in Thunder Bay.

Minister, can you tell Anna Watson and the hundreds of other cancer survivors in northern Ontario why you treat them like second-class citizens in their own province?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I might ask the leader of the third party the same question, why you didn't make any changes to the northern health travel grant. In fact, it was your party that actually tightened the criteria and it was your party that decided patients were required to access the specialist nearest to them. It was the Liberals who introduced the initiative; it was you who tightened the criteria.

In 1999 we did review the entire issue of the northern health travel grant, and I'm very pleased to tell you today that we are prepared to review it again this year.

Mr Hampton: Minister, this isn't about the northern health travel grant. You, your ministry, gave Cancer Care Ontario a special allocation of money, a special allocation above and beyond their budget, to pay for the costs of southern Ontario cancer patients to get cancer treatment in Thunder Bay, in Sudbury, in Detroit, in Buffalo. That's what you did for southern Ontario cancer patients.

All we're asking is that you do the same thing for northern Ontario cancer patients. Why should one cancer patient have the air fare, hotel accommodation, taxis and food paid for, and another one is told, "If you want to get to cancer treatment, you drive four, five, six, seven hours"—sometimes over an ice-covered highway—"and you pay \$1,000 out of your own pocket, find your own hotel room and go out and pay for your own meals"?

This has nothing to do with the northern health travel grant. If you can provide a special allocation of money for southern Ontario cancer patients to access cancer treatment, why can't you do the same thing for cancer patients from the north? We're all in the same province.

Hon Mrs Witmer: As the leader of the third party knows, our government has responded to the needs of people in this province more generously than any other government. We have added to our budget. We've gone from \$17.4 billion to \$22 billion this year. We have continued to do everything we can to take the services closer to home, to the people in all parts of the province.

I just repeat again, for the member here today, that we are quite prepared to review the information that we have regarding the needs of people in the north. I know you didn't hear me the first time, but we do understand and we will be responding.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary, the member for Nickel Belt.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Minister, there is no need for a review. For 13 full months now your government has been discriminating against northern cancer patients, because 13 months ago your government saw fit to provide additional special funding to Cancer Care Ontario to cover 100% of the costs of travel, accommodation and food for southern Ontario cancer patients who have to travel from their communities for cancer care.

Here we are 13 months later, and northern cancer patients, who regularly have to travel far from home for cancer treatment, can only get a small portion of their travel covered—nothing for accommodation, nothing for food.

Minister, isn't it about time you ended this discrimination? All it requires is some political will to ensure that northern cancer patients are treated the same as southern cancer patients. Will you today establish a special fund in northern Ontario to be administered by Cancer Care officials in the northeast and the northwest so that cancer patients in northern Ontario will be treated the same as you treat southern cancer patients now?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Our government has added \$155 million to the cancer budget. Cancer Care Ontario, the agency that coordinates standards and guidelines, is the group that recommended that costs be covered. However, I indicated in my very first response that we would review the issue.

1430

SCHOOLTEACHERS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is for the Minister of Education, but I would say to the Minister of Health that at a time when your government is giving away \$1 billion in corporate tax cuts—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): If it's a question for the Minister of Education, please place it to the Minister of Education.

Mr Hampton: Minister, I heard your statement today and I want to ask you a specific question. The Rainy River board of education reached an agreement last week with the secondary school teachers which will actually see some money taken out of administration and out of the budget for board governance and put into the classroom. That money will provide that teachers will be available on a regular basis, through the day, to provide for students who have special needs, or students who need to catch up on a subject, or students who are in danger of falling behind. It's an agreement that provides the very best for students. They're being told that your government doesn't like that agreement.

Minister, can you tell the students, the parents and the teachers there and across Ontario why an agreement that takes money out of administration and money out of board governance and puts it toward teachers providing help to students isn't going to be allowed by your government?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): Thank you for the question. First of all, I certainly haven't seen this agreement. I have no idea if it is in compliance with the regulations and the legislative amendments we'll be introducing shortly. If it is in compliance, this board has nothing to worry about.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): We think they have a lot to worry about, because we have an inkling about where this minister's thinking is at and we'll get it shortly, obviously, in terms of some presentation, of some statement they'll be making very soon. The fact of the matter is this: Rainy River District School Board has come to an agreement; Thames Valley, Metro Toronto, Metro Separate, York and Peel have shown similar agreements. These agreements fall within the regulations that you have established, but we get from you or your staffers that this is unacceptable to you people.

The reality check is this, Minister: The government's cuts to education and the new funding formula mean there are not as many teachers as before. Since 1995, there has been a 13% reduction in the number of teachers per 1,000 students in Ontario. It was 63.1 teachers per 1,000 in 1995; it's projected to be 52.4 teachers per 1,000 in 2000-01. That's the reality. You don't like this. You don't want people to know that.

I would have some, if not more, respect for you if you admitted your true intentions—if you admitted, for example, that your politics is to do more with less, meaning more students being taught by fewer teachers. That's part of your agenda. If you could admit this, I might have some respect for you, if not more. Can you do that and make me feel better?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I'm not prepared to admit anything that is not true. First of all, as the honourable member may know, we just increased the number of elementary teachers by 1,000 by bringing down the class size for kindergarten to grade 3. We think that's a very important improvement.

Second, for the first time, we actually recognize that remedial programs, remediation for students who need extra help, and teacher-adviser time are two very important quality initiatives. Not only did we recognize that specifically in our regulations, and that continues to be there, but we've actually backed it up with almost 90 million new dollars for those school boards to help deliver both of those programs.

What we're not prepared to do is to allow certain boards and certain unions to engage in creative non-compliance to get around provincial standards.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. During the course of the weekend we got some news about your apparent movement in connection with the Oak Ridges moraine. You will know that in our party we've been very concerned about the future of that unique bioregion, very concerned about the fact that it acts as the greater Toronto area's rain barrel, bringing cool, clean water. What we want to ask you then is, given your new-found commitment to the moraine, when exactly will you introduce a bill providing comprehensive protection to the Oak Ridges moraine? And when exactly will you put into place a freeze on all development pending passage of that same legislation?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I think the position of this government is that in a province of prosperity and in a province where growth and opportunity are happening, we should always seek to balance properly the interests of present and future generations, when it comes to biodiversity and ecological protection, with the growth, including housing growth and development that occurs in the greater Toronto area and indeed throughout all of Ontario.

Our position has been clear. We have a Planning Act. We also have a provincial policy statement pursuant to the Planning Act that we instituted in 1996. We also have the 1991 guidelines that are specific to the moraine that were instituted by the previous NDP government. All of that is on the table. We had a requirement from the board to respond in scientific language as to how to flesh out the definition of that protection. We responded, and that's now a matter of public record before the board.

Mr McGuinty: The Minister talks about trying to strike a balance. You tell me, Minister: This new directive or opinion you've offered to the OMB is going to provide some minimal protection, if it's successful, to a full 1% of the moraine; 99% will be unaffected by this opinion that you've offered. Let's put this in some real perspective. This wasn't legislation that's going to be introduced by the minister, it wasn't a ministerial order and it wasn't a policy directive. It was a recommendation. It was an opinion. It was a passing thought.

You have seen the latest polls when it comes to this issue and how your government is perceived in its refusal to take responsibility to save the Oak Ridges moraine. If you were serious, if you were genuinely committed to saving the Oak Ridges moraine for future generations, then you would pass and make into law this bill that has been put forward by Mike Colle of my party. That's what you'd do. It's ready to go right now.

Why don't you just stand up and admit that you are not interested in saving the Oak Ridges moraine? You're interested in doing nothing more than saving your political hide.

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member seems to have a fixation with polls, which is understandable, but the only polls that I saw indicated that if a vote were held

tomorrow in that catchment area of the community, 60% would vote Progressive Conservative under a Mike Harris government and only 30% would vote for the honourable member. I think those polls speak louder than his rhetoric.

I hope the honourable member is not suggesting that this honourable member or this government should interfere with the quasi-judicial process that is before the board. I hope the honourable member is not suggesting that.

This government had a requirement to respond to the board. We consulted with the Ministry of Natural Resources; we consulted with hydrogeologists; we consulted with the conservation authorities. We had an obligation to render an opinion. We rendered an opinion, nothing more, nothing less. The honourable member can infuse all he wants into this, but we are responding to a board request, and now it is up to the board, as it is their right and responsibility, to render a decision.

1440

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Education. School boards throughout the province are trying to serve the growing number of students within their communities and are realizing that there are numerous challenges with serving these exceptional students. I am aware that the ministry is working closely with boards to determine the pressure points and to identify some of the areas that need to be addressed in order to better serve those students who require special education. School boards that offer excellent special education programming are realizing increasing enrolment due to the excellent reputation in the special education services they provide.

Minister, my constituents want to know what is being done to address the pressure points that our school boards in York region are experiencing with respect to special education.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I thank the member for Thornhill for the question. I think every member in this House has heard stories from parents who were told that their child would never learn, and yet they have seen and we have seen that these children, with the right support, are able to do exceedingly well in their educational career and in their future career. That's why we've taken the steps we've taken to improve delivery and to increase resources.

One of the first priorities to address that I heard from all groups in my consultations last year, whether it was teachers or boards or whatever, was to improve special-needs funding, so we have indeed done that. We increased funding by another 12% this coming school year, the \$40 million I announced earlier this year, the money that the finance minister so kindly put in the budget—another 12% increase in special-needs funding. For the York Region District School Board that will mean another \$2 million specifically for special ed, and

for York Catholic there will be another \$1 million to help these students.

Mrs Molinari: I thank the minister for the answer, and I'm pleased to hear about the funds that are being put toward both boards. My question again is, how is the government going to ensure that students are getting the special education supports they require?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The member is quite correct; simply pumping more money into the system is not going to solve the problem if the special-needs programs are not being delivered appropriately. So the new money is there, more money than has ever been available to school boards for special needs in the history of special-needs funding, quite frankly. With that new money, we are working with boards and those organizations that represent special-needs students to ensure that there are appropriate program standards, not only for the way boards allocate the money and set their programs for special-needs children but also for those very important individual education plans that help the school specifically design the supports that special-needs student requires. With the new money for the third year in a row, plus better standards, plus better design for delivery of the programs, we are beginning to make this system the way parents and students want and need it to be.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): To the Minister of Health, I'd like to return to the cancer travel question. Minister, I brought this question up previously to you in the House. I want to return to it and say to you that just reviewing the northern health travel grant is not going to rectify the situation that northern cancer patients find themselves in when they find out that they have this catastrophic illness called cancer. The reason that you gave such an enriched travel grant program to southern Ontario cancer patients is, of course, because of the frequency of travel that is required to the treatment centres. When a southern Ontario person has to go to Thunder Bay and Sudbury, all of a sudden you realize, "Gee, they have to travel a long distance for this treatment."

But we in the north have had to do this for years. Over the years we've been able to go to Thunder Bay and Sudbury, but many still have to go to Toronto. Yet you pay us in a very different fashion than you do people from southern Ontario. When are you going to rectify this inequity and treat northerners fairly?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the member knows, it was Cancer Care Ontario that actually recommended to the Ministry of Health that they should cover all the costs in association with patients who were receiving radiation treatment. I will tell you that this government has undertaken a tremendous number of initiatives to bring services closer to the people in northern Ontario. In fact, we have been able to see the recruitment of 138 specialists since 1995. We're also updating the cancer

care centre in Thunder Bay. As you know, we have announced that we will be building a cancer facility in Sault Ste Marie, and we are also providing \$10 million toward the expansion of the centre in Sudbury. So we are moving forward in order that the people in northern Ontario will have those services closer to home than ever before.

Mr Ramsay: Today you allow an inequitable position to exist. You know there are patients in Thunder Bay who still have to travel to Toronto for specialized cancer treatments and they get the maximum of the northern health travel grant, \$415. At the same time, they cross paths in the Thunder Bay airport with couples from southern Ontario who get their airfare, hotel and meals completely paid for. It is unfair. This was brought up to the Treasurer on a CBC call-in show this week, and he said, "I think Lori has a point, it is somewhat inequitable."

I think it needs to be fixed. I think it's unfair. Northerners feel it's unfair. The Deputy Premier of the province believes it's unfair. When are you going to fix the situation and treat northerners the way you do southerners?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I indicated in my response to the leader of the third party that we would be reviewing the situation. Obviously the member didn't hear it then, but I'll repeat it for the fourth time.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the Solicitor General. Constituents in my riding have consistently told me that they take the issue of community safety very seriously. While attending local events, being on radio open-line shows and going door to door, people I've talked to in Peterborough all believe we should be able to live in our communities free from the fear of crime.

Public safety is one of our government's top priorities, but it appears it is not the top priority of the federal government. Could you tell my constituents in Peterborough and the people of Ontario some of the initiatives you have participated in to fight crime, especially our proposal for a sex offender registry?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): I believe, as does everyone in this House, that one of the most important things we have done was to pass Christopher's Law, which is the sex offender registry. This is the first time in all of Canada that there is a sex offender registry, which covers pedophiles, rapists and other sex offenders. Unfortunately, when this originally occurred, this was the result of a jury trial after young Christopher Stevenson was sexually abused and murdered. The recommendation clearly asked for a national sex offender registry. This did not occur, and because that didn't occur, we brought forward this measure. I'm proud to say that all members of this House supported this measure. It was very important. Members of the policing community

members of the communities, victims' groups all supported this, I think, very important bill.

Mr Stewart: Like you, I believe everyone in Ontario has the right to be safe from crime. We should be able to walk in our neighbourhoods, use public transit, live in our homes and send our children to school free from the fear of criminals.

Minister, you mentioned that the jury in the Christopher Stephenson inquest recommended that the federal government establish a nation-wide sex offender registry, but the federal government has refused to do so. As well, I understand you recently wrote to the federal Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada, the Honourable Anne McLellan, urging the minister to take action to create a national registry, to allow persons throughout the country to be better protected from the most vile of offenders. What is your opinion on the lack of action by the federal government?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: As we all know—and it's not rocket science—sex offenders do not respect borders between provinces. That's one of the reasons why the jury recommended a national sex offender registry. I was greatly disappointed, if I could understate my position, when we approached the federal government with this request to do a national sex offender registry. It says here in an article:

"Ms McLellan's office would not comment on the Ontario request, turning the matter over to Lawrence MacAulay, the federal Solicitor General.

"Dan Brien, a spokesman for Mr MacAulay, said Ottawa was not interested in creating a national registry because it believes the Canadian Police Information Centre ... already does the job."

Can this be the same system that the federal Auditor General criticized because the technology was outdated and not responsive? Clearly, we need to take these steps. Clearly, the federal government has to do something to protect the rest of the country. We are doing our best in Ontario, but I think we should do something across the country.

450

ST PETER'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): My question is to the Minister of Health. Your health care decisions and policies continue to create a health care crisis in Hamilton, one after another after another. Today it's St Peter's Hospital. In May 1998, your Health Services Restructuring Commission made a decision, which was soundly criticized in our community, that St Peter's Hospital was to shut down effectively April 30 of this year as a chronic care hospital. Under your rule, they should have taken no other patients after April 30. However, much to their credit, this hospital has decided to defy your order that hurts Hamilton seniors, and they are now accepting new patients. They've taken in 11 new patients since April 30, and I can tell you that number is going to continue to grow.

My question to you is, will you extend the deadline for St Peter's Hospital to close as a chronic care facility to allow these new patients to receive the service they need and the hospital to receive the funding that they need to do the job?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I have been in conversation with St Peter's Hospital—in fact, I was a couple of weeks ago—and I'm very pleased to indicate to you that we have granted an extension of the date of closure for the hospital in Hamilton.

Mr Christopherson: Minister, you didn't tell me how long you've extended it for. If it's merely a matter of six months or a year, that's not going to solve the problem. St Peter's is responsible for managing all the chronic care beds in our community. They also happen to have, at \$238.55, the lowest patient day rate in Ontario. Right now, if you shut down St Peter's as a chronic care hospital, before the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp has a chance to build the new chronic care beds, that means six Hamilton elderly will be turned away at the door of their hospital.

Minister, I need to hear you say that the extension will continue, regardless of the time line, until such time as there are other chronic care beds built, up and operational, in the city of Hamilton. Anything less is unacceptable.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have been meeting, and we're going to be continuing to meet, with the facility and the people at St Peter's as to the conversion. We have indicated to them that we will continue to ensure that the time line takes into consideration the needs of the residents and the surrounding community. The terms of the extension are presently being finalized by the ministry. In fact, they might even be meeting with people from St Peter's at the present time. But I can assure you there will be no closing of the facility until all of the patients can be accommodated safely elsewhere.

PROVINCIAL SALES TAX

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. In your budget documents you state that the government will introduce legislation exempting educational CD-ROMs purchased by schools, community colleges, universities and public libraries—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member is trying to place his question. Sorry for the interruption.

Mr Kwinter: Minister, your budget documents say you're going to exempt schools, community colleges, universities and public libraries from retail sales tax. There's a small business in my riding that has been there since 1992 and employs 24 people. This company sells instructional computer books which are exempt from provincial sales tax. Your provincial sales tax auditors have done an audit of this firm and maintain that any of these books that contain a demonstration CD-ROM as part of the training component must pay provincial sales

tax on the value of the CD-ROM. To give you an example, here's a typical book that they sell. This is a book that addresses the system we have at Queen's Park. In the back it has a CD-ROM. Without that CD-ROM, this book is virtually useless. It's like trying to teach someone to drive a car with a manual and saying, "If you want to get into the car, you're going to have to pay extra."

What is happening is this: To add insult to injury, the auditors are going back four years in sales, and the resultant PST liability could be in excess of \$150,000, enough to potentially put this company out of business, since they have no way of going back to the individual purchasers to collect the tax.

Minister, could you tell us why a computer training book that has as an integral part of the book an instructional CD-ROM shouldn't be PST-exempt in its entirety?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Obviously, we believe that the CD-ROM component of education should be exempt from provincial retail sales tax, which is why we made the changes we did in the budget. If the member would kindly send the information over to me, I would be happy to look into it on behalf of his constituents.

Mr Kwinter: On Friday I went to the University of Toronto bookstore and purchased this book, and it also has a CD-ROM in it. When I went to pay for it, they didn't charge me PST; they just charged me GST. After that I went to Chapters, where I saw a book that really attracted my attention. It was called McAfee Anti-Virus for Beginners, and I thought it would be a good choice. This book also has a CD-ROM, and they also didn't charge me any provincial sales tax.

I'm not advocating that these bookstores should be paying the PST. On the contrary, I think that your officials have got to be brought into the cyber-age and realize that instructional material printed on paper and instructional material in a CD-ROM should be treated exactly the same way as far as the PST is concerned.

Mr Minister, could you give me your assurance that you will instruct your officials to maintain a level playing field and not treat one seller differently from the other, and would you call off your tax hounds that could potentially put this business out of business and get rid of 24 jobs?

Hon Mr Eves: It is quite possible, I suppose, that there were officials in the Ministry of Finance in the retail sales tax collection division and the auditing division who weren't up to date on what was going on. The member notes that his experience on Friday was different than it was prior to the budget, perhaps.

I have told him that I would be glad to look into the entire matter and take it back to the ministry and get him an answer.

RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technol-

ogy. It's hard to believe that we're now in the new millennium. Time is moving quickly and so is the development of new technologies. With all the advancement in the world of telecommunications, one can be on holiday overseas and still check if one has e-mail back at home.

This leads me to the issue of the increasing number of people coming to Toronto to work. The city's growing population means an increase in the number of people commuting to work each day, and we've all had the experience of being stuck in traffic. We don't need to have everything in Toronto, so by expanding telecommunication services into rural Ontario, more businesses could then relocate outside the greater Toronto area and still have the ability to stay in close touch with their daily contacts.

Minister, what are you doing to make sure rural Ontario areas such as Northumberland have the same level of telecommunication services as those in large urban centres?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I thank the honourable member for Northumberland for his question. I think it follows quite well on Mr Kwinter's question about bringing people into the cyberworld, which, by the way, I thought was an excellent exchange between the finance minister and the honourable member across the way.

The same is true with this question. Honourable members should know it wasn't many years ago that those of us in rural Ontario and small-town Ontario were on telephone party lines. Throughout my lifetime, the telephone system has never been upgraded in rural or small-town Ontario.

Last year we undertook—through the data service improvement program we spent \$11.5 million—along with private sector partners like Bell Canada and many of the public and private sector phone companies, to upgrade the rural and small-town telephone and telecommunications infrastructure so that people in those areas can have the same level of telecommunications, telephone and Internet services that people in large urban centres like Toronto and Barrie and Kingston and Ottawa have enjoyed for many years. So I'm happy to report to the honourable member that we're well on our way. It's a very positive investment. And yes, no longer will Internet service providers or those who do digital media or those who work on a computer at home have to be located just in the city.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

1500

Mr Galt: Thank you very much for helping establish high-tech assistance for rural Ontario. Back in March when the Task Force on Rural Economic Renewal, which I chair, was travelling Ontario, we heard about the importance of infrastructure in general in rural Ontario but particularly the high-tech infrastructure. It's greatly needed and we certainly look forward to more initiatives.

I'm concerned about communities particularly in rural riding. Communities such as Colborne, Brighton and

Campbellford need this support if they're to flourish in the 21st century. Minister, when can we expect to see them up and running in areas east of Toronto, like in my riding of Northumberland?

Hon Mr Wilson: I'm pleased to report to the honourable member that 193 of the 310 telephone exchanges have now been upgraded since we started this initiative in the middle of last year. By June 30 of this year, we expect the rest of the 310 exchanges to all be completed. That includes Colborne, Brighton, Campbellford and the rest of Ontario. As I said, this is the most extensive upgrade of the telephone switching system in this province that we've seen in the last 40 years, and it will bring Internet services to the same level that we see in our large urban centres.

If you're like me in Wasaga Beach, it takes almost five minutes for an Internet Web page to load up on my computer. It is so slow it isn't worth it. It's that way in about 75% of the land mass of Ontario. This government recognized that through reports from the economic development people. Economic development officers and commissions around this province have been telling successive governments to upgrade the telephone system. The business case wasn't there in the past. With a little help from the taxpayers, the business case is there. I'm pleased to report that this major initiative is moving ahead on schedule and for the benefit of the people of rural and small-town Ontario.

WATER EXTRACTION

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): In the absence of the Minister of the Environment, I will direct my question to the Minister of Natural Resources. Waterlief Management Inc is a company with its management offices in Tweed, Ontario. According to its Web site, its goal is to obtain as many spring water permits as possible and develop these sources into water-bottling facilities. Waterlief has been granted a permit by the Ministry of the Environment to take 1.3 million litres of water per day for 10 years from Rawdon Creek, an aquifer that supplies drinking water to thousands of homes downstream.

As part of the application process, a site evaluation must be done by an independent expert. The assessment accompanying this application has been completed by Ian D. Wilson Ltd, consulting geologists. However, Ian D. Wilson Associates is also listed as part of the management team of Waterlief Management Inc, the applicant or the permit.

The preservation of our water in Ontario is very serious business. Surely the government sees a conflict of interest in this situation, when a member of the company applying to the ministry for a water-taking permit is also completing the required review for the application. Will the government assure me that absolutely no non-farm water-taking permits will be granted or allowed to continue unless a neutral third party has assessed the impact of the water withdrawal?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): As the member knows, various ministries in this government have been concerned about the situation regarding water quantities and qualities in Ontario. We've answered questions in the House prior to this date. Speaking about water quality and water quantity in the province, we have Ontario Water Response 2000, which we have been working on with municipalities and others, and that includes water-taking. I'm sure the member opposite understands that the Ministry of the Environment is responsible for water-taking permits. I'd be more than happy to advise my colleague of the concerns of the member opposite.

Mr Parsons: We're no longer hewers of wood and drawers of water in Ontario. We need to recognize the value of our water. The reality of math is that 10% of an unknown number is an unknown number. The Ministry of the Environment grants permits with a condition that the water withdrawal not exceed 10% of the flow, yet no one—not the ministry, not the conservation authorities, no one—knows what the current flows are in our rivers and streams right now, let alone over the next 10 years.

I ask again whether this government has the fortitude to stop issuing water permits for non-farm use until the current water situation is evaluated.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'm pleased to inform the member opposite of a couple of issues. One, for a water-taking permit to be issued in the province, not only does a hydrogeological study have to be submitted to the ministry, but the ministry then reviews that with their expert opinions and makes sure it's accurate. I can also assure the member opposite that for the first time in the province, the ministries co-operatively—the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of the Environment and other ministries concerned with water-taking and the use of water in the province—have got together and put together their databases. We have put a budget together for that purpose. So we'll be informed not only in our decisions this year but in future years. I can assure the member opposite that we are taking those steps. We're taking them now in response to the needs of the province.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, I was surprised—in fact, shocked—last week to read a press release from the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture indicating that he felt there was no support in last week's budget for Ontario's hard-working farmers. Minister, would you please explain to us the opportunities and the programs that were in the budget for the benefit of Ontario's farmers?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): Thank you very much to the member from Carleton-Gloucester for the question. Indeed, the 2000 budget was good news for all Ontario farmers. With all the other good things that were in the budget that affect all the people of Ontario—not just

farmers but people who live in rural Ontario, people who live in urban Ontario—all the people will have great benefits from the budget.

Specifically for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I just would like to point out to the member's constituents and to the farmers and the people across the province that the budget was increased by 50%. One of the things that we will be doing for the farmers with that money is, we will increase the safety net money by \$40 million a year to help those farmers most in need. On top of that, we will be making the retail sales tax on farm building material exempt at source. This will mean that farmers will be able to reduce the red tape involved. When they go and purchase products to build farm buildings, they will get their tax exemption. They will no longer have to apply and wait for months to get a return of their own money. That will be a great benefit to rural and farming Ontario.

Mr Coburn: Last week's budget touched many and varied programs right across the province, not the least small-town and rural Ontario. Minister, would you explain to us some of the initiatives that have been taken through the small-town and rural Ontario strategy?

Hon Mr Hardeman: I'd like to indicate that I was delighted that the Ontario government and Finance Minister Eves are putting in \$600 million over the next five years to help Ontario's small-town and rural development through a fund that will be set up to build rural infrastructure. Two thirds of the fund, some \$80 million a year, will be invested in rural infrastructure, and an additional \$40 million will go into rural economic development. The infrastructure component of the program will focus on strategic infrastructure critical to the future economic growth of the quality of life in small-town and rural Ontario. It will encourage them to work together to address those challenges.

I have been in contact with the president of the federation of agriculture. He's looking forward to working with the government on the criteria to make sure that all of rural Ontario and the farming community benefit from that program. He believes it is a good program that can be tapped into by all of rural Ontario, including our farming community. I thank the member very much for the question. We look forward to working with our farmers to the benefit of all of agriculture.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: Minister, you're taking the right position at the OMB when it comes to the Oak Ridges moraine, but there's a big problem. If you win at the board, it won't cost the province anything beyond the legal costs, because the developers don't currently have the right to build there. But you've left taxpayers wide open to huge costs if you lose. If the OMB gives the developers the right to build on the moraine, it will cost big bucks to take those rights away if you legislate later.

Richmond Hill's planning commissioner, Janet Babcock, has estimated that it would cost \$1 billion to expropriate all the land on the moraine, and that's just in Richmond Hill, Minister. So I'm asking, will you save the province \$1 billion and legislate now?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would love to engage in a public policy debate with the honourable member. I think she knows that I would engage in that debate fully. However, we are before the board. I'm not in a position to speculate on what would happen after the board renders its decision.

It is not my place to do so at this time because that would perhaps be seen as influencing the board's position, so I cannot do that. All I can tell the honourable member is that the board requested from my ministry that we articulate how best to protect the ecological, the environmental, the biodiversity, the water interests of the moraine. We have rendered our opinion after consulting with conservation authorities, after consulting with MNR, after consulting with scientists. We have done so. I support my ministry and that's as far as I can go.

1510

Ms Churley: Minister, let's engage in a little public policy here. You know as well as I do that you have the power right now, despite what's happening at the OMB, to legislate. That is something your government can do, and you know it. You've chosen not to.

I want to believe that you sincerely want to protect the Oak Ridges moraine, but your action to date is not compelling. Your government, which by the way has no trouble legislating people's rights away in other situations, is suddenly getting all timid when it comes to the Oak Ridges moraine. What's going on here?

You know that the developers do not have the right to build now, but you seem too keen to wait and see what the board determines. You're acting like a stakeholder, Minister, rather than a government with the power to legislate. Do you hear what I'm saying here? If you lose at the OMB, in order to save the Oak Ridges moraine, which you say you want to do, it's going to cost the taxpayers, the people of Ontario, at least \$1 billion. That's just in Richmond Hill, and as you know, the Oak Ridges moraine is a lot bigger than that. Are you taking the position today that you are going to take that risk and, in order to save the Oak Ridges moraine, cost the taxpayers over \$1 billion?

Hon Mr Clement: We are before the board. We have identified a public interest—a public interest, incidentally, which is contingent upon and respectful of the 1991 guidelines which her government instituted, announced and supported. We're simply before the board pursuant to the Planning Act, pursuant to the 1996 provincial policy statement, pursuant to the 1991 NDP guidelines. We're pursuing the public interest before the board; I can say nothing more than that.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, today the Globe and Mail stated that what is "astonishing" about the transformation of the judiciary into a kangaroo court under Bill 66 is that Attorney General Jim Flaherty would leap on to the back of this sick donkey of a bill and whip it toward passage." The president of the Advocates' Society said, "In close to 30 years of practising law in this province, I have yet to see such a blatant attempt to undermine the independence of our judiciary."

Attorney General, you're a civil litigator. You are vested with special responsibilities to check judicial independence. Victims of crimes do not want a kangaroo court; they want an independent, impartial judiciary. How could you of all people support this bill?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I assume that the member opposite has read the bill. It is a private member's bill and it attempts to do two things. The first is to require some statistical reporting of information that is already available through the court system. The second thing it does is give this Legislative Assembly the opportunity to pass a resolution with respect to appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada. Those are not revolutionary ideas, except perhaps the second one about the province having some role in appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The independence of the judiciary relates to the ability of someone to enter a courtroom and be satisfied that they will have an impartial hearing by an impartial judge, which is what we have and safeguard in Ontario.

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): We're pleased to hear that there will finally be a review of the northern health travel grant, which we now is inadequate, terribly unfairly funded and discriminatory. I have more petitions, which we continue to read every day.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:
"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I am pleased to sign this petition. I would also like you to know that Brian Frost from Thunder Bay is one of our new pages here.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have petitions forwarded to me by Wayne Marston, president of the Hamilton and District Labour Council, signed by citizens from all across the region of Hamilton-Wentworth.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Sarnia is witnessing many women developing mesothelioma and asbestosis as a result of the asbestos brought home on their husbands' work clothing; and

"Whereas similar cases are occurring in other areas of the province;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to allow compensation for family members who develop occupational illness as a result of workplace toxins inadvertently brought home."

I'm in agreement with these petitioners and add my name accordingly.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

Once again I have the signatures of many constituents who share our concern and our frustration that there's no change in this program.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I have a petition here from the people of the township of Nakina who are very concerned and upset about the forced amalgamation of their community into a massive community called Greenstone. Basically stretching from Barrie to North Bay would describe the size of this municipality in northern Ontario. Let me read the petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the corporation of the township of Nakina is an incorporated municipality; and

"Whereas the corporation of the township of Nakina has continued to operate as a community in its own right since 1923; and

"Whereas amalgamation with other distant communities could prove to be detrimental to the individualistic lifestyle associated with living in the township of Nakina; and

"Whereas the economic justification for the creation of Greenstone no longer exists, and its creation may result in a loss of local services and an increased tax burden on the residents of Nakina; and

"Whereas the residents of the township of Nakina would like to continue to be the municipality known as the corporation of the township of Nakina;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that the corporation of the township of Nakina continues to be a separate municipality in the province of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign this. This is a remarkable community in my riding.

1520

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

As I am opposed to any form of health care apartheid, I sign this petition as I am in complete agreement with it.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents of the riding of Durham to the Legislature of the province of Ontario.

"Whereas the province of Ontario exempted Highway 407 east from a public hearing and then passed the Highway 407 Act to further exempt the proposed highway extension from important provincial environmental laws, such as the Ontario Water Resources Act, the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act and the fill regulations of the Conservation Authorities Act; and

"Whereas heavy equipment is now being used to clear the eastern path of the highway, without any environmental guidelines, controls or monitoring;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario, as a matter of extreme urgency, to put in place such environmental monitoring procedures and controls as are necessary to prevent extreme degradation such as bulldozers working in stream beds, and numerous other environmentally destructive acts that have been

witnessed since the 407 east extension was permitted to go ahead."

I'm pleased to submit this petition.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I have read many of these related to the Black Sturgeon Road and the fact that the Ministry of Natural Resources is not doing the work they should.

"Whereas the Black Sturgeon Road in the district of Thunder Bay is an important access road for fishing and hunting to area lakes and forests;

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is attempting to block access to this road by refusing to implement upgrades;

"Whereas a vast area will be rendered inaccessible unless the government maintains responsibility for this road;

"Whereas the government has recently increased fees for hunting and fishing yet still has considerable funds left in its special purpose account;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to use funds from the Ministry of Natural Resources special purpose account to maintain the Black Sturgeon Road as an important access road to protect the rights and freedoms of fishers and hunters in the district of Thunder Bay."

I'm very pleased to sign my name to this petition.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas children are exposed to sexually explicit material in variety stores and video rental outlets;

"Whereas bylaws vary from city to city and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact legislation which will:

"Create uniform standards in Ontario to prevent minors from being exposed to sexually explicit material in retail establishments;

"Make it illegal to sell, rent, or loan sexually explicit materials to minors."

I am in a complete agreement with this petition. I therefore affix my signature to it and give it to Amber Beattie from London to give it to the table.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition. I'm just looking at some of the names of people from Durham who have signed this and I'm not sure if some of these people have read this. There's a name here, Troy Young, and Steve Cooke, and John

Mutton. All of those people are running in the next municipal election. I thought I'd mention that here as they're signing a petition to the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario.

"Whereas the province of Ontario exempted Highway 407 east from a public hearing and then passed the Highway 407 Act to further exempt the proposed highway extension from important provincial environmental laws, such as the Ontario Water Resources Act, the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act and the fill regulations of the Conservation Authorities Act; and

"Whereas heavy equipment is now being used to clear the eastern path of the highway, without any environmental guidelines, control or monitoring;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as a matter of extreme urgency, to put in place such environmental monitoring procedures and controls as are necessary to prevent extreme degradation such as bulldozers working in stream beds, and numerous other environmentally destructive acts that have been witnessed since the 407 east extension was permitted to go ahead."

I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a large number of petitions from my constituents all the way from Manitouwadge straight through to Killarney:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in their communities."

Obviously, I agree with these petitions and have signed them.

ABORTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It doesn't appear that many people are making presentation of petitions today, Mr Speaker, so I thank you for allowing me to present as many as I am. From my riding of Durham I have one here from the Mother Teresa parish CWL, located in Courtice, which of course is in Durham. It's from a number of people. I know most of them personally.

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas we have recently learned that our tax money is being used to pay the rent on the Morgentaler abortuary; and

"Whereas by the end of his lease this amount will be \$5 million;

"Whereas we strongly object to the use of our tax dollars for this purpose;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately cease these payments."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this petition.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): "Whereas it's the government's plan to remove G467 therapeutic physiotherapy services from the OHIP formulary; and

"Whereas the only recourse for patients will then be to go through hospital outpatient services that already face waiting lists of three to four months; and

"Whereas these same services are provided in the other areas of the province through schedule 5 clinics, which are funded through a \$39-million allocation by the Ministry of Health; and

"Whereas of that \$39 million none has been allocated for northwestern Ontario; and

"Whereas if the delisting of G-code physiotherapy services goes forward, because there are no schedule 5 clinics in northwestern Ontario, there is a real fear that a two-tier system for physiotherapy services will be the norm in that one system would accommodate those who have private insurance or enough money to pay out of pocket, while the other tier will be one where those in need wait for months on waiting lists while continuing to suffer; and

"Whereas as our population ages, those requiring physiotherapy will increase and without these services the strain on our medical system will only increase as people aggravate old injuries that were not properly treated through modern physiotherapy treatments; and

"Whereas the delisting of G-code physiotherapy services is further indication that there is a real erosion by this government of sound medical services in northwestern Ontario;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the planned fee

schedule delisting of G467 therapeutic physiotherapy services and provide northwestern Ontario with a portion of the \$39-million Ministry of Health allocation for physiotherapy services."

I'm pleased to sign this. I'm pleased, once again, that Brian Frost from Thunder Bay is here to take my petition.

1530

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2000 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 4, 2000, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I believe when we left off the member for Sarnia-Lambton had finished her debate, so the format will now be that we will have questions and comments. We will then return once more to the member for Sarnia-Lambton for two minutes to respond. Going in rotation, questions and comments.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Having had a chance to review as well as watch some of the comments of the member from Sarnia-Lambton, I want to echo much of the concern that she has raised. I think she did an excellent job of articulating some of the concerns that those of us who are looking past the headlines have about this budget.

Certainly, one of the key topics of discussion that I found over the weekend—the beautiful weather we had gave people an opportunity to be outside and to talk. I was around my community a lot over the weekend, and virtually everywhere I went people were talking about this \$200 charade. I didn't have to prompt the discussion. I didn't have to lead anybody anywhere. People were saying to me: "This \$200, I don't get it. Is this supposed to really help my family in some way?" What surprised me the most was that the next statement was always, "Wouldn't all that money together have done something more?"

They didn't know the figure, and when I reminded them that the individual \$200 cheques in total are worth \$1 billion, without exception—and I'm talking about people who are in poverty, all the way to people who are doing very, very well in our society—all said that the \$200 concept was the wrong way to go and that it made a lot more sense for the government of Ontario to take \$1 billion and put it—certainly in Hamilton we were talking about Hamilton's health care system. Put our share of that in Hamilton-Wentworth toward the funding we need for Henderson hospital, the funding we need for St. Peter's Hospital, the funding we need for home care; put it into the education system. Put it somewhere where it will do some good, but get off this public relations exercise and get on with governing.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I heard and was somewhat surprised by the comments of the member from Sarnia-Lambton, undoubtedly well intentioned and perhaps a reflection of the fact that she hadn't had an opportunity to reflect upon the budget in its totality but did have an opportunity to speak to it, and I appreciate that she took that opportunity. Nevertheless, as I considered her comments over the weekend, I also considered some of the policy statements the party she represents has made over the years. So you'll understand my surprise at the following quote, which was made by the Liberal Party in the 1995 election: "A Liberal government will repeal the 5% tax on auto insurance premiums and work to make auto insurance more affordable."

Obviously I was somewhat surprised by the omission in her comments of the praise that one would have thought would be forthcoming from that member, from that party, for what is an initiative that very much echoes what the Liberals said they wanted to see happen, because in fact it is now going to happen. It didn't happen when the Liberals were in power, but fortunately it will happen now. Undoubtedly when the member has an opportunity to speak again she may well wish to address that point, and I would be very pleased to hear from her in that regard.

Similarly, I'd like to remind her of the policy commitment made in the 1995 provincial Ontario Liberal policy document that said: "A Liberal government will reduce the corporate tax rate for small businesses"—just what we did. "A Liberal government will ... reduce the number of small businesses required to file for the corporate minimum tax"—just what we did.

Undoubtedly when the member has an opportunity to reflect upon what stand or stands her party has taken over the years, and the details of this budget that has by and large been accepted with great applause from the people of Ontario, I'm sure she will add her applause to the cheering that has been coming from various parts of this province.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I'd like to comment on the speeches by both the member from Sarnia-Lambton and the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale, whose comments were very much in line with those of the mayor of Toronto, Mr Lastman, who said that this budget which we're debating today did nothing for the city of Toronto. In fact, the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale talked about public transportation, talked about the homeless and the affordable housing crisis that we have in Ontario today. I'm surprised that the member from Willowdale wouldn't acknowledge that the mayor of Toronto has made these comments about his budget, not about something that happened 15 years ago, 10 years ago, five years ago but that happened in his House just this very last week.

In fact, the member for Sarnia-Lambton quite rightly pointed out that we now enjoy for the very first time in Ontario a triple-digit debt. Now, for my friends opposite and for the viewers at home, I know that they would want to know what it means to the operating budget that we

are now paying more in interest costs, monies that go not toward programs, not toward any of the much-needed areas of health care or of education in this province, but are going strictly to pay the interest on the debt because the Harris government has added \$24 billion to the debt. I know that my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton mentioned this fact and I'm surprised that the member for Willowdale and none of the government members wish to talk about this aspect of the budget which we're being asked to approve.

The facts and the figures that members of the government wish to draw out and the quotations that they wish to extol about the budget seem very selective, yet they refuse to address this very serious problem. In fact, the crisis is not only in public transit but affordable housing, the cuts to the environment and the cuts to the Ministry of Natural Resources were also mentioned by the member for Sarnia-Lambton. They were very astute comments and I think she said it very well.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I was here on Thursday when the member for Sarnia-Lambton, Ms Di Cocco, stayed at length and at much inconvenience I'm sure, on a Thursday, when you'd like to get home, to make her comments toward the budget, and I respect that. Where we part company is in what I'm about to say. Technically, she's really not paying much attention. She has a job, and I understand that, which is to criticize our government. But really, broadly speaking, this is good news and I'll be waiting for her two-minute response to take issue with my observations.

But I think she should listen. She did ask, "How does the budget deal with this?" talking about post-secondary education, and that primary, secondary and post-secondary systems have been under siege.

I'll just respond to some of the comments that have been said to my constituency office. This is from Brock University, where my son is a student. President David Atkinson said: "We are obviously very pleased. We are waiting to hear more details, but it is the message we wanted to hear. We're pretty excited...." and it goes on.

I know that our own Durham College president is very excited by the amount of investment.

Fanshawe president Howard Rundle chairs a committee of presidents of Ontario's community colleges. He welcomed the plan to pop more money, 286 million, into capital funds for post-secondary, calling it "a significant and much-needed investment." These are very strong, ringing endorsements for a budget that has been widely accepted as a landmark opportunity.

I'm looking at what the municipal response has been to this budget. I'm looking here at the comments of the regional chair of Ottawa, Bob Chiarelli, a former Liberal member in this House. What did he say about the budget? He said, "The budget gives local taxpayers an average of \$69 savings on the provincial portion of their tax bill." That, combined with the average \$45 property tax cut the region delivered in its budget, is \$114 per family. Clearly, there's one Liberal who's got the message. There are more, I'm sure.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. The member for Sarnia-Lambton has two minutes to respond.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I must say that I premised my discussion on the quote that this budget is a deliberate instrument of social and economic guidance. In that context, I talk about sustainable economic prosperity and sustainable development, which, as all the members in this House know, is more than just tax cuts. It's more than just taking care of business interests, because good government is also about taking care of people development. The fact is that the environment is at the bottom of the list. Because the environment directly jeopardizes the future of sustainable development, if we don't put the environment at the top of the our priorities, we're going to jeopardize our future.

The member from Willowdale suggested that I didn't have a chance to truly view the document. Again, I find that sometimes there's a patronizing tone from across the way to the members on this side of the House.

I would like to suggest that competitiveness through a well-educated population is what this is all about. Yes, education has been under siege; the attacks continue. That suggests to me that you are saying, "We do care about a well-educated population, but we continue the attacks on the educators." That undermines sustainable development.

Frankly, the fact that you only talk about the deficit and not the debt suggests that even fiscal responsibility is not balanced.

1540

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate this opportunity to have my 20 minutes, which I would remind everyone is all the government's new House rules will allow—20 minutes to debate a budget that has the kinds of implications that this one and in fact all have. It's definitely a real curtailment of democracy.

At the outset, I want to point out that the government continues to take all the credit in the world for the booming economy, and yet virtually every economist from every walk of life is coming forward and saying, "Look, the economy in Ontario is so overheated and revved up right now because of the US economy; in particular the auto industry." In fact, it's primarily the exports out of Ontario into the United States that are giving us the economic demand that we have in our communities to keep the factories and offices supplied with what they need to build or provide a service that is then exported down to the United States. There has to be a demand somewhere to create that demand for supply, and it's in the United States.

A US citizen making a decision about buying a new car doesn't care a fig about what the personal income tax rate is in Ontario. You could eliminate it entirely and pay absolutely no income tax to the province of Ontario, and that is not going to change by one iota how a US family makes a decision about buying a new car. That family in

Kansas doesn't care at all about the tax system in Ontario. What they want to know is, "How much does the car cost and does it meet my needs?" Not only do our workers here in Ontario build the finest automobiles in the world, we also do it cheaper. Why? Primarily because of our universal public health care system.

It's important for us to remember two things: First, the reason there's money available right now is not because of anything this government did—unless you want to give them the credit for being brilliant in terms of the timing of when they became government; 90% of the economic growth in Ontario is directly attributable to the booming auto demand originating in the United States. The second thing we have to remember is the reason these plants exist in Ontario is that our health care system, in addition to the skill level of our workers, means that we are hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars cheaper in terms of our labour costs.

Here you've got one of the most skilled, reliable, trained workforces in the entire world linked with the fact that our universal health care system is money that the auto makers don't have to build into their wage rate, and you have a huge economic incentive for the auto industry to originate plants and offices in Ontario. So when the US economy takes off, as it has—biggest economic boom in North America in history—linked with what I've just described in terms of what we have going for us in Ontario, guess what? You couldn't screw up this economy if you tried. There is so much demand for the goods that create jobs and circulate money in our economy that it's a slam-dunk. And yet the government wants to tell everybody: "Oh, it's because of us. It's what we did. It's our tax incentives and our this, that and the other."

The fact is you've made more people poor and in greater poverty than they've ever been before, our health care system is in complete chaos and crisis, and our education system is exactly the same way. You're slicing and slashing away at the social safety net that we as Canadians, for most of our lives, have all been so very proud of. The environmental laws that protect the health of our citizens as well as create the kind of environment where people want to live and raise their family and invest money—you've savaged those at the altar of more benefits to the corporate side of our economic equation.

There's nothing wrong with making sure that we've got a corporate community that works and wants to do business here, but my goodness, you don't need to bend over and hand away everything that's in the treasury when we've already got a booming economy. You serve that same purpose when you cut our environmental laws. You serve that same purpose when you slash and cut our labour laws. You serve that same purpose when you, in an inconceivable way, damage the people who are most vulnerable in our society, who derive the least benefit from a community that was chosen—I believe five times—by the United Nations as the best place in the world to live.

We didn't get that because we slash more environmental protection laws than any other country in the world. We didn't get it because we treat our poor more shabbily than anyone else. We didn't get it because we freeze out people who earn minimum wage from any kind of a decent standard of living, because you froze their wages for over five and half years. I might point out parenthetically that the United States felt comfortable enough in raising their minimum wage twice. It certainly didn't affect their economy, and yet you've said that's part of your agenda. You attack and dismantle our public, universal health care system, the same in our education system, and somehow you seem to think that that's going to allow us to continue to have the title of being the best place in the world to live. It's not.

What exactly happened during this budget? First of all, if you're really, really wealthy, once again, thanks to Mike Harris, you're about to get a lot richer. If you made better than \$330,000 a year—and believe me, there is a growing number of people who do, not as many, mind you, as the number of poor that are growing in Ontario, but there is a growing number of people who are getting rich, thanks to your tax policies. These very comfortable—dare I say wealthy—individuals, at an income of \$330,000 a year, get \$10,000 a year out of this budget. That's just this budget; it's not even talking about the 30% tax break that this same group of Ontarians got, thanks to Mike Harris.

If you made \$30,000 in this budget, do you know what you get? A hundred bucks. So if you make \$330,000 a year, you get \$10,000—this is after-tax dollars, obviously, because the tax system is being changed—and \$100 if you make \$30,000. In fact, the top 5% of income earners—that's people who earn \$95,000 a year or more—are going to get \$733 million to share. That's 27% of all the money that's available in the tax cuts. So the top 5% get five times their fair share. How is that supposed to be good for the majority of Ontarians?

1550

Then this 200 bucks—I'm not going to spend too much time on that, because we've even got a separate bill coming for that one. That's going to be fun, because I'll tell you, if ever there's an issue that you called wrong and that there's a growing backlash against, it's this 200 bucks. First of all, let's point out again that the same pattern as before is in place with your 200 bucks. That would be that if you're the poorest in our society, you get the boot from this government. In this case, if you don't make enough money to pay \$200 or more in income tax, you don't get it. The formula provides that if you paid \$150, you'd get \$150, but believe me, if you're only paying \$150 in income tax, you're not making very much in this province, certainly not compared to the \$330,000-a-year people, who just got an extra \$10,000 a year. They'll get the full 200 bucks, no problem.

Some 20% of the population don't make enough money to receive the full 200 bucks. That's a million people, a million of the poorest people in Ontario, who don't get your \$200 giveaway. They are further, I argue,

discriminated against because that's a collective \$1 billion, if you total it up, that could have gone to education, to health care, to our social services. Because believe me, for these one million individuals, if there isn't a public health care system, they're not going to have health care. If there isn't a decent, highly skilled, credible education system that is public and funded adequately, their kids don't get an education. That's the way you treat Ontarians: You divide them up between those who have and those who don't.

What happened with health care, still the number one issue in Ontario? You put in one cent. For every dollar you gave in tax cuts, you put one cent into health care. For those who are interested in these things, that happens to work out to a 0.000002% increase in real money for health care. Billions of dollars—I feel like Carl Sagan—for the corporate sector and the very wealthy; 0.000002% for the public health care system that everyone else absolutely has to have. Quite frankly, those who have that much money could afford the private insurance if there wasn't a public system. That's not a problem for them, but for the rest of us in Ontario it's either a public health care system or nothing.

It does absolutely nothing to deal with the question of the nurse crisis that exists right now. There aren't enough nurses. You fired most of them who are gone, and they went to other jurisdictions looking for work. When you were called on your bungle, you decided to make an announcement that you're going to hire X thousands of nurses. The problem is that a study you paid for shows that by 2011 we will need between 60,000 and 90,000 nurses. You made no provision whatsoever in this budget for the hiring of those nurses. That's 8,000 a year. Where are they going to come from? How are they going to be paid? Do you care?

The hospitals are running deficits—unprecedented levels of deficits unheard of before—to the tune of \$1.8 billion right now. Nothing in this budget speaks to what you're going to do about that. Certainly there's not enough new money in the health care budget; 0.000002% doesn't take you too far when you're already starting \$1.8 billion in the hole for our hospital system.

Believe me, I know of what I speak. We went through a nightmare scenario in Hamilton around the Henderson hospital, and it was only because of the pressure that the Hamilton MPPs brought to bear in this place and the fact that you've got a by-election—I don't want to puff up my own self-importance or that of the other Hamilton members by saying that did it all. I think it played a significant role, but what really helped was the fact that you've got a by-election coming in our community and you didn't want the closure of Henderson hospital wrapped around the neck of your Tory candidate.

In Hamilton we know all about hospital deficits and what they mean, and to their eternal credit, I say this to the board, given the amount of hits they're taking these days—and I understand unfortunately that Scott Rowan has stepped down, and I consider that to be a severe blow to our health care system. I think Scott Rowan did the

best possible job anyone could do under extremely difficult circumstances and he's going to be missed. They made the decision that they were going to make sure that the service delivery in the emergency ward and in the wards and rooms across that hospital came first and your budget cuts came second. I say bravo to them.

The same thing with St Peter's Hospital. I asked a question today of the health minister. It sounds like we might get the assurance we want. I went over and talked to her after. I'll be pleased when I hear her articulate very clearly the quid pro quo that there will be no beds closed in St Peter's until such time as these new chronic care beds elsewhere in the community are built and in place and ready to be filled. If we hear that, then that's at least something. But bear in mind that it's a lousy decision, a stupid decision to make in the first place, to shut down St Peter's. It's one of the finest chronic care hospitals in the entire country and it happens to have the lowest per day cost of any chronic care hospital in all of Ontario. But you're shutting it down. So even if you give us the extension we want, you still haven't done what should be done for the seniors in the Hamilton area, who by the way support St Peter's solidly. I support the fact that before today's answer was given in the House, the board had directed that patients were to be admitted after April 30 into St Peter's Hospital even though the government wasn't providing one penny of funding. Bravo, I say to that board of directors and that management that said the health care needs of Hamilton's seniors come first and Mike Harris's phony budget numbers and deficit slashing come second.

I'll tell you, quite frankly, that the school board did that not long ago, joining with other school boards when you tried to force them to shut down hundreds and hundreds of inner schools across the province. They all united together and you backed down. Bullies usually do when they're finally confronted with something they can't overcome. They just turn and run. We all know that from our schoolyard days. I hope more and more boards stick together at the school level and at the hospital level and unite together, because if they do—there are only a handful of you in here; you can't take on and overrun every single board for every education system and every hospital, and for that matter municipality, in the province of Ontario. As much as you're the most highly centralized government we've ever had, even you can't do that.

I've only got a couple of minutes left. In terms of education in the elementary and secondary system, for a government that says they are focusing on "student-focused funding," you have effectively cut \$810 per student per year since 1995—thanks a lot—and further cuts in this budget. Billions of dollars for the very wealthy and the corporate sector when they're already making record profits—that's what's so obscene. It's not as if they aren't already making profits. It's good that they're strong, it's good that they're having profits and creating jobs, this is good, but why on earth does there

have to be such greed here? Why so much more when there are so many other people who are hurting?

1600

Let me say directly to a lot of people who look at the headlines, an average working middle-class family, and say, "You know, this is pretty good. This is going to strengthen the corporate sector and all those things," look, that's all hype. Where else would you find a scenario, if you stood back with a blank slate and said, "We've got the best economy we've ever had in the history of this province, we've said debt reduction is the number one priority," and you go and borrow another \$13 billion to pay for your tax cuts? You give away billions of taxpayer dollars, because that's what they are; the tax cuts are tax expenditures, and you are giving that money to the corporations at a time when they are already at record levels of profit. We have more and more people insecure about their future, worried whether they are going to have a job 10 years from now when they are maybe in their early 50s, saying, "Where am I going to be in 10 years if my job is gone?" or "I'm already laid off. What have you done for me in this budget? Where am I going to find somewhere to go? My kids are not getting the education they should get, that they used to get. The health care system isn't the way it used to be."

How does all that add up to being in the best interests of the broader society when the biggest thing you're proud of is giving taxpayers' money to corporations and individuals who are already having the best fiscal years of their lives? Yet, at the same time, at the other end of the spectrum there are more and more people who are in poverty, and those numbers are going up. It's up 118% since 1989—huge numbers since you came into power.

This is not a budget for Ontarians. This is a budget for your corporate buddies, and that needs to be said in this place.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): The member for Hamilton West is very critical of a budget that has been favoured by more than 60% of the people of this province. In fact, 60% of the people of this province have indicated they were so much in favour of it that if there were an election held today, they would vote for the Progressive Conservative Party.

Let's look at something he said. He said, for instance, that people of the province do not want the \$200 rebate on their taxes. It's interesting. Bruce Trussler from Kitchener wrote a letter to the editor of the Kitchener-Waterloo Record dated May 5 where he said:

"If you ask people if they want 200 bucks or good, affordable, sustainable health care, they will take the latter in every instance, Ontario Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty says.

"I did an informal poll of 14 people. The replies were unanimous—show me the money.

"How the leader of a major political party can make such a statement is beyond me. It's time the Liberal Party looked seriously at finding a new leader."

Obviously, it's not just the Liberals who are saying this, it's also the NDP, but the important point to keep in mind is that we are not just giving back the \$200; we are also increasing the spending in health care. We have advanced the spending in health care by two full years from what we said in the Blueprint, the document on which we ran in the last election, when we said we would increase health care spending to \$22.7 billion by the end of our mandate. That will be done within two years from last June. This year we're talking an increase to \$22 billion. Not only that, but we've increased spending on special education; we've increased by 10%. That's not enough for you.

If we did everything the Liberals and the NDP say we should, spent everything the way they would do it, then we would have a deficit instead of—guess what?—a surplus, the first surplus we've had in this province in 30 years.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I thought the member for Hamilton West raised some very valid points about the budget, the first balanced budget in 10 years, and I'm very happy to respond to some of the points that I thought he made rather well.

I was interested in his comments about the dependence of Ontario's economy on the great growth that there is in the United States. Certainly my colleague the member for Scarborough-Agincourt has very regularly brought to the attention of our caucus and to the attention of this House that as a province we are especially dependent on the healthy market south of the border. I think it's really unfortunate and somewhat foolhardy that the members of the government would neglect the significant impact a healthy American economy has on Ontario's economy. To present so regularly in this House that it has been solely from their tax cuts that we are enjoying the growth in Ontario today I think is really quite irresponsible.

When one considers the developed countries in the world and the percentage of the GDP in exports, I think we need to pay some significant attention to the fact that in Ontario 54% of our GDP depends on offshore activity. When one considers other developed countries, like the United States, only 11% of their GDP is from offshore investments or offshore expenditures, and in Japan, 12%. I think it's important for members on the other side of the House to appreciate that the growth has not necessarily been from their tax cuts but from the very healthy economy. I'm very pleased that the member from Hamilton West raised that this afternoon.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I want to congratulate the member for Hamilton West for pointing out to the House and to those watching the fact that we have a growing gap in this country, and in this province in particular, between the very wealthy and the poor and even the middle class. That is documented information. That isn't just coming from the NDP, it's a fact. It's a reality. My God, if there is ever a time to do something about that, it is now in good economic times. That is common sense.

What is interesting and what people don't talk about very much is that when the NDP was in power, yes, there was a huge deficit, which ironically would have been paid back years before this government paid it back, because they've been borrowing money to give a tax cut. What we were doing during the worst recession since the 1930s was not giving it to big corporations and rich people; we were building a cushion to help people, those at the very bottom and in the middle, to buy and have enough to eat and have a house to live in during a very bad recession.

This government had the luck to come into power when the economy had already begun to improve again, and what did they do? Instead of raising the minimum wage in good economic times and sharing some of that wealth a little more, they didn't raise the minimum wage, and in every budget there are more and more giveaways to the corporate world that is making huge profits. There is something wrong with this picture, and that's what the member from Hamilton West is trying to point out. Even the US has raised the minimum wage twice.

I couldn't believe the cuts to the environment. In this budget, again in good economic times, when over \$5 billion has been given to the corporations in this province, the Ministry of the Environment was cut. Up to \$100 million has been cut now. It's outrageous.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the member for Hamilton West's views on the budget. He's critical of the budget. If we look back at his time in office, everybody in this province, rich or poor, paid more taxes. In Mr Eves's budget of last year, 600,000 low-income people were dropped from the tax rolls totally and more people in this budget were dropped from the tax rolls. The fact of the matter is, the honourable member says that people making \$300,000-plus a year pay \$30,000 less in income tax. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, I as a cabinet minister make about \$110,000 and I have yet to receive a tax cut from this government. You forget to mention all taxes in the fair share health levy, which adds 12% tax to anyone earning over \$100,000 in the province, or the 3% surtax which we haven't begun to deal with in this province.

If you read the economic papers, if you read the Bay Street papers in response to this budget and if you read the social papers in this province, every single one of them said this was the most progressive budget seen in decades in this province. People at the lower income get a much larger tax break than anyone at the higher income. It's an average of 30%—slightly more than that, actually—benefiting those at the low end in the 50% to 60% range and those at the high end not at all. I wish the honourable members would stop spreading stuff that simply isn't factual and stick to the facts, give people the entire facts of the entire budget and look at the progressive nature of this budget. Not only that, it pumped money back into priority areas like health care, like education, and that benefits all the people of Ontario. It's a terrific budget.

My colleague the Honourable Ernie Eves should be proud, and is proud I'm sure, that he was able to deliver that budget, correct the sins of the past with these staggering deficits, which penalized everyone in every income bracket and penalized their children and grandchildren, and at the same time make sure those who are less fortunate than ourselves are either taken off the tax rolls or their taxes are reduced significantly.

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The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton West has two minutes to respond.

Mr Christopherson: I want to thank the members for Simcoe-Grey, Broadview-Greenwood, Sarnia-Lambton and Kitchener Centre, who listened and commented.

To the minister from Simcoe-Grey who was on his feet last, let me just say that I'm not surprised you want us to stop saying these things. The reality is that we don't pull these numbers out of a hat. We do the same as you. We go to experts in the field, and we ask them, "Take a look at what this budget means, apply it to people at different levels of income and tell us what it says."

You can run away from it all you want, but the fact of the matter is that if you make \$330,000 a year or more you're going to get a \$10,000 benefit, and if you earn \$30,000 you're going to get \$100. You can play with percentages and talk about the fact that the poorest people get the biggest benefit because they get a higher percentage, but in real dollars that you need when you walk into the store you're a whole lot better off under your regime to be very wealthy than very poor. It is very bad luck on your part to be a poor person in Mike Harris's Ontario, because not only do you not get placed first, you're not even in the running.

I want to say to that minister and to the member from Kitchener Centre, particularly when he said—I can't believe he told this. You went and did a personal survey and all these people told you, "Show me the money." So you're telling me that all those people unanimously said, especially if they have a decent income: "Yes, give me the 200 bucks. I don't give a damn about anybody else or anything else."

That's a whole lot different than what's happening in Hamilton and elsewhere, where people are saying: "You know what? This 200 bucks doesn't matter, but my health care system does. How about putting \$1 billion there? How about putting \$1 billion in the education system?" You know what? That \$1 billion would just begin to repair the damage you've done to both.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): It's an honour to speak today on behalf of my constituents in Thornhill on budget 2000. This government and its finance minister have much to be proud of with the introduction of this budget. The budget is balanced, as promised. The net debt of the province has been reduced, as promised. Taxes are going down, as promised. Health care is going up, also as promised. We are living in prosperous times, and Ontarians all over this province will share in the prosperity.

The reaction to this budget in Thornhill has been very positive. From an editorial in the newspaper that serves my constituency comes the following quote:

"It is difficult to be negative about Ontario's balanced budget, a fitting way to start the new millennium.

"With its commitment to giving cash back to the people who earn it, its commitment to streamlining the operations of institutions, agencies and boards, its commitment to re-allocating funds to where they do the most good ... the government is simply making good on promises made to the people of Ontario. It is a buoyant time. The economy is rolling. Finance Minister Ernie Eves and his team have worked diligently to provide Ontario with a sound fiscal footing for today—and one on which our children can build a secure future.

"The finance minister announced an increase in spending on special education, \$140 million, and promised to reduce average class sizes in kindergarten to grade 3 ... he has allocated \$5 million to launch a prevention program to help identify children who may be at risk of physical or emotional abuse or neglect.

"There's \$300 million for arenas, golf courses and tourist attractions, a cash infusion that helps fuel the economies of small communities.

"Small businesses will see tax cuts. Major corporations will see their taxes drop over the next six years. There is money for highway development, for programs to help teens with eating disorders, for programs to encourage disadvantaged children to take up sports. There is money to address the problem of child prostitution.

"To be able to do all these things for the people of Ontario, while returning some of their money to them ... is cause for celebration."

That's the editorial in the local paper.

The people of Thornhill are very positive about this budget. As their representative, I congratulate the finance minister on his vision, his courage and his determination to deliver this budget to the people of Ontario.

As I speak to this House, there are many areas of the budget I could focus on, but in the time I have allotted I would like to focus on three main parts, each of which is very important to me and the constituents of Thornhill: health care, education and post-secondary education.

On health care: When the Harris government was elected in 1995, health care spending in Ontario was brought to \$17.4 billion. Truly, this was a lot of money, but Ontarians, including those in Thornhill, said it wasn't enough. Since 1995, health care spending has increased every single year, despite the federal Liberal government shirking its responsibilities. When joint federal-provincial programs were introduced several decades ago, one of the founding principles was that both levels of government would co-operate, each funding fully one half of the program. This is the essence of co-operative federalism. As the federal Liberals slashed funding on this essential service to the bone, our government increased real-dollar funding. This budget brings health care spending up to \$22 billion. Of course, this doesn't include any of the capital expenditures that this govern-

ment is undertaking in order to improve health care delivery in this province. When these funds are included, health care spending is far higher than ever before.

In the same editorial from the community newspaper which serves the Thornhill community comes the following comment: "The health care system is seeing an infusion of about \$300 million to deliver more nurses and doctors.... The province is promising free tuition for medical students who agree to practise in northern Ontario, where doctor shortages are having a critical impact on quality of care. There's money for a plan to prevent stroke and money to help foreign-trained nurses and other health care professionals meet Ontario's licensing standards. Health care is the lion's share of the provincial budget at \$22 billion."

This government has chosen to invest money in true reform, modernization and genuinely improved service. It is clear to me and it is clear to many of my constituents in Thornhill that this government is taking the higher ground and is genuinely trying to improve health care in this province. This government is pursuing meaningful reform in the health care sector. We live in the 21st century. We need 21st-century solutions to 21st-century problems. This budget is a means toward that end.

Primary care reform and expansion has been a priority of this government. Recent announcements serve to confirm that. The budget provides ample funds for this project. It is important to note the significance of the agreement reached between the Ministry of Health and the Ontario Medical Association as well as the Ontario Nurses' Association. Labour peace in this vital sector is more secure, and all of the relevant stakeholders can now be brought to the table to ensure the continued improvements of our health care system for all Ontarians, including those I represent in Thornhill.

This budget has truly helped hospitals in the Thornhill area meet the challenges of growth. York region has been growing for years. The size of the community served by the York Central Hospital increases by over 14,000 people per year. York Central's patient cases have increased by almost 9% per year. It has been the fastest-growing hospital in Ontario for the last four years. Something had to be done. As hospital president Frank Lussing noted, the hospital is trying to make up for 20 years of chronic underfunding. He pointed out that the ministry is indeed listening to the needs of hospitals.

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The ministry and the government listened to what Frank Lussing and other hospital administrators had to say. As a result, the budget of York Central Hospital will increase by 15% this year. This expansion has allowed a new vision for the hospital to be developed. This vision will in turn lead to excellence in patient care in York region through a coordinated network of health services.

This government clearly has a vision for health care. The vision is not to rely exclusively on old methods. It is clear that the system, though staffed by dedicated people who care about their work, is not perfect in every respect. As the government, it is our responsibility to constantly

try to improve the delivery of health care in this province. My constituents in Thornhill demand it. I am certain that the people represented in this Legislative Assembly demand it as well.

This government's vision for health care is a system that is accessible to all Ontarians, a system which provides a seamless network of health care providers for Ontarians who need these services, one which addresses serious health issues such as cancer care, cardiac care and kidney disease. This government is one which is determined to provide alternatives, such as toll-free phone lines for health advice, information and referral. Technology is improving and changing rapidly. We truly live in dynamic times. Ontarians demand and deserve a health care system that is everything it needs to be.

On education, in the riding of Thornhill, there are many citizens who send their children to schools that are not in the public or Catholic boards of education. These schools fall outside of the Ministry of Education and, as a result, the children of these schools don't have access to the full range of services that their colleagues in public or Catholic boards enjoy.

For example, until this government's announcement in this budget, special-needs children at denominational schools did not have their medical requirements met by either the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Health. This budget, this government, however, is providing such funding. The Ministry of Health is going to work to eliminate unfair barriers for the parents of special-needs children who want their children to pursue faith-based education. As the finance minister commented during the budget introduction, "It is the fair and equitable thing to do."

Special needs is a concern of many of my constituents in Thornhill. I am very pleased to now be able to tell them that this government has listened to them and will be acting to address those concerns. This investment is part of the larger commitment of our government to children enrolled in special-education programs; \$140 million is invested in this area. This includes specially trained teachers, reading clinics and reading buddy programs to improve the skills of students just entering the education system. This also includes funding for students with speech and language disorders and learning disabilities, as well as increasing the number of specialist teachers and professional support. This part of the budget is more than a step in the right direction. It is a giant leap toward fulfilling a vision that this government has for education in this province.

There are further indications from Thornhill that the reactions to this budget are strongly favourable. Mr John Sabo, the treasurer of the York Catholic District School Board, commented: "We are extremely pleased with the announcement of additional funding. Clearly, it will help alleviate many of the pressures we are experiencing in our board."

Further, Mr Bill Hogarth, the director of the York Region District School Board, said: "The budget is bursting with money for education. It is great. It will

certainly help this board. As you know, with the growth in (the number of) students in the region, there is now more money to hire additional teachers. Also, there is new money for reading assistance and special education. The budget is great news for our board and the education system."

Government spending on education is not merely an expense today; it is an investment for tomorrow. Combined with early years programs that the minister for children, in response to the McCain-Mustard report, has announced, this budget is helping to ensure our children start their lives with every possible advantage that will help them live their lives to the fullest.

In post-secondary education, we are encouraged by the \$742 million in infrastructure funding that has been made available through the SuperBuild Growth Fund to help our colleges and universities maintain and even enhance their quality. It is no accident that three Ontario universities are among the top five medical/doctoral institutions in the Maclean's annual ranking. This government is proud of all of the fine educational institutions and the great work accomplished by their professors, students and administrators.

The president of the University of Toronto, Robert Prichard, was quoted in the Toronto Star last week. When asked about his reaction to the budget promise of close to \$1 billion for research over the next 10 years, he commented that, "(this) is serious money that will have one heck of an impact on our ability to compete internationally."

The government is working to secure the future of post-secondary education in this province. As the minister announced on April 28, students will soon have unprecedented choice when they make their post-secondary selections. An additional \$286 million in SuperBuild investments to expand and renew our colleges and universities will support an additional 24 capital projects that will create 15,587 more spaces for students.

More students than ever are attending Ontario's post-secondary institutions, and our government is making the necessary changes to accommodate them. Students recognize that college and university education is a valuable investment in their future through the development of skills that will help them in life. In acknowledging this demographic change, the government is providing funding for universities that increase student spaces.

In the last three decades, there has been no capital investment in colleges and universities as large as this government has made. Some 73,000 new permanent student spaces have been assured, guaranteeing space for every qualified and motivated student in this province. Our children and grandchildren will have access to the higher education that will make them better workers and better citizens—truly essential in a global society.

It is truly an exciting time to be involved in this sector. Not only are buildings being approved and constructed and new student spaces being made available, but also ground-breaking research is being conducted at colleges and universities. This budget will further facilitate this

research. The Ontario Innovation Trust was endowed \$500 million—truly an important investment. This fund is intended for research infrastructure at Ontario institutions such as hospitals, colleges and universities. The purpose is to provide and develop more laboratory spaces and high-technology equipment in order to support research in many health-related fields.

There are six high schools in the riding of Thornhill: Thornhill Secondary School, Thornlea Secondary School, Vaughan Secondary School, Westmount Collegiate, St Robert Catholic High School and St Elizabeth Catholic High School. This government has demonstrated its continuing commitment to these students, and will be providing additional capital funds to colleges and universities, which will allow students to pursue affordable and accessible post-secondary education. I am so very proud to be part of a government that is not only ensuring the success of the economy today but is making the necessary investment to ensure the success of the economy tomorrow.

Before I conclude, I would like to read another column in one of the local papers, by Tracy Kimball. It's entitled, "If You Don't Want Your \$200, You Can Always Give It Away." I've heard people in the House talk about the \$200. I quote from the article:

"There are many families out there who could really use a \$200 cheque—or \$400, if both parents work—in the fall, just as school as beginning. It could buy you snowsuits for a couple of kids and maybe even some boots, hats and mittens. It could replace worn tires on your car or pay much-needed repairs. Two hundred dollars could purchase a new bed for your child or some new clothes or supplies. Saying the money is not enough to make a difference for hard-working families is arrogant."

She goes on to talk about how many different people have commented on the \$200 return, and in the end she says: "The rest of us, however, need our money and will gladly accept it with a smile. Thank you, Mike Harris."

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In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the Minister of Finance on this extraordinary budget. It contains meaningful initiatives that will enhance the standard of living for Ontarians and will continue to provide the environment that will encourage future economic growth. This budget proves that Ontario will continue to become a great place to live, work and raise a family.

This budget is the first of its kind in many years. I am confident, and my constituents in Thornhill are confident that Ontario is on the right track. They look forward to seeing how the money that was allocated in the budget will be implemented throughout all of the areas that the money has been allocated to: through education, through health, through tax cuts. All of the communities in Thornhill and all of the residents really appreciate and thank the minister for a wonderful budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown)
Questions and comments?

Mrs Dombrowsky: I'm delighted to have a few moments to comment on what the honourable member from Thornhill has raised in the House today. I found it interesting when she was quoting local media. She obviously lives in a very different part of the province than I do. It's certainly not what all of the media reports in my part of the world presented to the reading public, and I thought I might just take a few minutes to read to the members opposite what was in my local media:

"This week, I tuned in as Ernie Eves was reminding us all how happy we should be at his Tory government giving to health care, giving taxpayers a tax cut and giving, giving, giving. Around him, Mike Harris and the rest of the government side of the Legislature clapped and honked like trained seals.

"You, good taxpayer, are expected to be grateful for the economic foresight of this benevolent government as it saves, saves, saves you taxes and spends, spends, spends tax dollars on health and education infrastructure and rural northern communities. The above-mentioned shopping list just happens to be the same raft of people, things and places the Tories starved, slashed and eviscerated in the first five years of their revolution."

That's what is being reported in my part of the world, ladies and gentlemen.

I also found it interesting when Mr John Sabo was quoted with regard to dollars that are being spent in education. A quote was attributed to Mr Sabo that it would "help alleviate many of the pressures we were experiencing in our board." I would suggest to the members of the government that you have responsibility not to help alleviate the problem but to alleviate it, period. That is your responsibility as a government, and I thank Mr Sabo for the comment he gave to the member.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'm pleased to provide some comments in response to the speech made by the member from Thornhill. Since she focused on health and education, I'll do the same.

It's always a good idea to read the fine print of the budget, to go to the budget papers, because then you get a true look at what the government has really done. If you go to the budget papers and look at the estimates, which we will all end up voting on in this House at some point in the future, it's really clear that despite the government rhetoric around a commitment to health care, that wasn't demonstrated in terms of increased investment in health care. The increase in the health budget from last year to this year is a mere 0.0000002%. That's what the increase actually is. In terms of real dollars, the actual increase is \$49 million. When you compare that to the amount of unanticipated revenue that the government brought in last year, which was \$5.3 billion, \$49 million is hardly a significant share of the windfall. The government has no basis whatsoever to say they've made a major investment in health care. It's \$49 million out of a windfall of \$5.3 billion.

If you look at the same estimates and you go to the education budget and look at the investment in education, you will see that the investment this year is actually less

than last year—\$104 million less this year. So despite the government's rhetoric again and despite the windfall in revenue, that's hardly a sound and increased investment in education. The government is going to spend \$104 million less this year to educate our young students. That's not an investment at all.

Mr O'Toole: I want to extend my compliments and congratulations to the member from Thornhill for a very thoughtful review of a very important and I might say landmark budget for the people of Ontario.

On a more personal note, when you look at it from real people's perspective—I think that's what we all have to do, drive this down to, "How does it affect my constituents?" hard-working taxpayers who have been overtaxed for many years. I think all people here would agree with that general observation. I look at real people like Pat Crossman. He's a self-employed person. "It would be nice to knock a few bills down," the 35-year-old father said." This is a case of not just the tax cuts but the \$200 which, as the member from Thornhill said, will allow them to make choices, not some government bureaucrat making choices, about how to spend their tax money. As elected representatives, we're just the temporary custodians here.

"Mrs Crossman, a stay-at-home mom, was happy to hear the province is willing to put more money toward schools. 'If you get these kids off to a good start, it really helps them through the higher grades,' she explained." Mr Crossman is the owner of a small pizza store in Kanata.

If you extend it to general terms, it is really trying to provide a means of getting the taxpayers—"A couple with two children and a net income of \$60,000 would save \$1,870 in Ontario's personal income tax and more than 40% more next year. By contrast, this family will save \$750, only 9% in the federal-provincial tax savings portion announced in Finance Minister Paul Martin's budget. Ontario's tax cuts would be more than twice the amount and four times the percentage of the federal tax savings." So you can see the evidence is in.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise to respond to the comments made by the member from Thornhill. First of all I think what is really significant about this budget is more what is not there rather than what it contains. There was a real missed opportunity here by the government.

The previous speaker said, "How does this impact your constituents?" Let me tell you how it impacts my constituents in Hamilton East. Many of my constituents who live in the shadow of big industry, who live in the shadow of steel mills, are impacted by the environment. Their kids have asthma and can't go out and play on a number of days in the year when you have smog. Seniors who have heart problems are affected by air quality. Let me tell you what it does for those folks: absolutely nothing. You've cut the Ministry of the Environment again, totally abandoning any commitment you had or previous governments certainly had to the environment.

How does it impact my constituents who can't get affordable housing? As my colleague David Caplan has time and again said in this House, you've gotten out of the business of helping to ensure that there's affordable housing. How does it help those constituents? How does it help a single mom with a couple of kids who is living in rundown conditions in my riding because there is no affordable housing, not only in Hamilton but anywhere across this province? You've gotten out of that business. What does this budget do for that individual?

What does this budget do for the hard-working steel-worker in my riding who has kids in university, who sees tuition fees going through the roof and who knows he cannot afford to continue to pay those tuition fees, who knows his son or daughter is going to come out of university with a huge debt? What it does is absolutely nothing for those folks. So it impacts average Ontarians in a very negative way.

You had a glorious opportunity. You brag about a balanced budget but you fail to tell us that, with the exception of the disgraced government of British Columbia, everyone else did it before you did. You came to the dance a little late. The band was wrapping up and going home by the time you showed up. But you brag about that. The tragedy here is that in good economic times a real opportunity can make a real impact on people's lives in many ways, to help people, everyday Ontarians, and you blew that opportunity and you wasted it away. It's a real shame and a tragedy that that has happened.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Thornhill has up to two minutes to reply.

1640

Mrs Molinari: I'd like to thank the member from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, the member from Nickel Belt, the member from Durham and the member from Hamilton East.

I want to speak first about the comments made by the member from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington about the media reports. Certainly the communities are different and certainly all of the communities in the province differ. This government looks at putting the money and the resources where the needs are, and that is reflected in this budget: Where there is growth and there is need, that's the area that has to be addressed.

The member for Hamilton East commented about what's not there. Well, this is a budget and there is so much there that people have commented to me that this appears to be an election budget, and there's no election. This tells me that this government is committed to doing the right thing and is putting the resources where they're needed.

I want to talk about universities. That was also raised by the member for Hamilton East. This government is doing more for post-secondary education than any other government. There are 24 more capital projects that are being introduced.

Mr Caplan: Less than in 1995.

Mrs Molinari: If the member would listen to the announcement, he would recognize that those are very

positive things. But unfortunately the members opposite are there only to oppose and they don't look at what benefits there are in the announcements being made. We're doing more to provide for post-secondary education. Recently we have engaged in consultation to provide more opportunities for students who are seeking post-secondary education.

This is a government that recognizes that we need to move forward. We cannot stay in the ideas of the past—

Mr Caplan: What does that mean? That doesn't mean anything.

Mrs Molinari: —because they don't work. This is the 21st century. We need to be moving, in the 21st century, ideas that benefit people in the 21st century.

The Acting Speaker: I would remind members that heckling is always out of order, as the member for Don Valley East knows, and he needs to be in his seat.

Further debate?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I feel privileged to be able to stand here and represent my constituents, and in fact northern Ontario, in discussing this budget. I will share my time with the members from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and Prince Edward-Hastings. If you look at this from a northern perspective, you will see that what the government has been saying is anything but reality in northern Ontario. This isn't a successful budget for northerners. In fact, it robs northerners of some of our basic rights and erodes our opportunities even further. I'd like to outline a few of the ways it does that.

First of all, the \$200 rebate that some of the people of Ontario are going to get hasn't gone over the way this government would have wanted it to go over. If there was one thing that was on the minds of people I talked to this weekend, it was the \$200 but, more important, it was the reason behind the \$200. It hasn't been accepted as a dividend. More often I heard the comment, "This is not so much a dividend, it's a payoff, and we're not buying the payoff." So if the government's motive was to try to get some of those people they've alienated back onside, it has not been successful. Everyone I spoke to talked about how valuable that \$1 billion would have been, had it been placed in different areas such as health care and education. Most of my constituents talked about the almost monumental task our local community has in raising \$45 million for this government's health services restructuring report, which imposed one hospital system on the people of Sudbury and northeastern Ontario as our referral centre. They thought that \$1 billion could have been better spent, without any question of a doubt.

If you look at the inequities in the budget when it comes to the northern health travel grant for cancer patients, you see that in order to fix the problem, all this government has to do is give a \$3-million allocation to the health travel grant for cancer patients and the problem will be solved. There would be equity and balance and fairness between southern Ontario people who suffer from cancer and northern Ontario people who suffer from cancer and have to travel.

Just so the people of Ontario understand, because it's important, we've been debating this. Certainly, David Ramsay brought this up in the House two weeks ago and the members from Thunder Bay-Atikokan and Thunder Bay-Superior North have brought this up in debate. The member from Algoma-Manitoulin has brought this up in petitions and in questions over the course of the last several weeks. The difference is simple: Northern Ontario residents who require the travel grant get partial transportation costs. Southern Ontario people who have to travel in order to treatment for cancer get travel costs, accommodation, meals and, in some instances, the ability to have a partner travel with them. Fundamentally, we in the north feel that that's unfair and discriminatory. The chair of the northeast region of Cancer Care Ontario is the vice-chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Gerry Loughheed Jr, and he most aptly put it: "a form of health care apartheid." He is someone who knows cancer. He doesn't call names generally, but he is very, very concerned about this inequity.

In order to deal with this inequity, the government would simply have to put \$3 million aside. That's not asking too much. When we talk about the economic boom and recovery that's supposedly taking place across northern Ontario, that isn't the case in Sudbury; 17.3% of Sudburians live below the poverty level. That's horrible and this government should be ashamed of that statistic. In fact, the 8.5% unemployment rate in Sudbury is several points above the provincial average, several points above the Canadian average. You know, northern Ontario has always been several points above when it comes to the unemployment rate. When you look at child poverty rising by 118%, food bank usage increasing by 258%, it is very, very evident that this government's budget this year has been a failure for northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I'm delighted to stand in the House and share with the members of the government who would suggest that their fiscal plan for the next year is going to place Ontario on the road to prosperity. I certainly represent a very large part of eastern Ontario and I have to say that in my part of Ontario there are very grave concerns about the lack of attention that this government has provided to some of the very important activities that occur there.

I was listening very closely when the Minister of Finance delivered the budget and I was most disappointed and very seriously concerned that in the minister's 15- to 20-minute dissertation about his plan he did not once mention the word "environment." In my part of Ontario, our environment is very important to us. When I consider important issues, I hear from my constituents regularly about environmental issues. They're concerned about the fact that water-taking permits in this province are given so very freely and without consideration. Why? Because the Ministry of the Environment does not have the resources at its disposal to pay attention, to give the consideration, to do the background, to provide the

quality service in that area. There's an important clean up of the Moira River watershed underway and there's a real worry that there may not be sufficient resources designated to that very worthy project.

There is a proposed dump expansion. In eastern Ontario, where there are a lot of small rural communities and many, many farmers who work very hard to provide all of us with the food we eat, more and more of our agricultural land is being taken for landfill. Yet we don't see any additional resources directed toward the Ministry of the Environment. In fact, the Ministry of the Environment will receive 9% less funding than it did last year—9% less at a time when I would suggest that our environment should be very near, if not at, the top of our list of priorities as a province.

The members across the way have indicated that we need 21st-century ideas. We need to get with it, get ready for the 21st century. I ask you, members of the government, what will be left for those people in the 21st century if we don't work conscientiously to preserve it?

1650

I am very concerned that there is not one additional cent of revenue for agriculture. There is a change in the way farmers do business with regard to point-of-sale tax provisions within the budget, which I know will be welcomed by farmers in my riding, but it goes nowhere near far enough in addressing the many needs that they bring to my attention very regularly. I would suggest that when we're thinking about the 21st century and the wonderful growth that we're planning for in Ontario, how are you planning to feed them? Where do you think we're going to get the food if we do not invest in our agriculture industry?

By the way, while very regularly we hear about the great industrial and commercial growth in the province, the second-largest industry in Ontario is agriculture. How do you plan to sustain the community that we are building in the province if we do not adequately support the agriculture industry? I was again most disappointed that with the \$5.3 billion additional revenues that the government had not planned on, they could not find a little bit more money for the farmers who feed you every day.

If I can go back to what is presented in the media, and we tend to focus regularly on what's in the national media and the media in this part of the world, I'm just turning to one of the articles in my local media: "After Slashing and Burning, Tories Don't Deserve Gratitude." So please don't stand on the other side of the House and suggest to the people in my area, after they have suffered significantly the closures of many government offices that provided important services to the people in Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, "We'll give you a \$200 cheque in the mail and you should be happy." People in eastern Ontario are not quite that shallow. They understand that when they pay taxes, they receive services in return for that, and they very clearly understand that now those services are not there for them to access any longer. It has placed a significant burden on them.

I believe I have a responsibility to try and have the members of the government understand that the plan is not broad in its focus; it's very narrow. Geographically, members on this side of House represent a large part of the province that missed the focus. You need to turn your attention to my part of the world and many other parts of Ontario that didn't benefit in terms of improved services.

We're hearing about the northern health care services. People who have cancer will continue to be penalized in this province because of where they live. How very sad it is to think that in the very best economic times that we've had—ever, in the history of the province—people continue to endure that type of discrimination.

I'm very happy to share the rest of this time with my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): The budget presentation last week was a wonderful show. But that's what it was, a show. It reminds me of the old political adage, "Where there's smoke, there's mirrors." There has certainly been a lot of concentration on that \$200 that's going to come back.

There is a phrase used in US politics that refers to "the permanent campaign." I believe this \$200 is part of the permanent campaign. We saw it the last term with this government, when they used \$107 million, which should have gone to hospitals or education, on advertisements in the media.

This is a similar sort of thing: Take the money, give it to the people, send them a letter saying it's coming, put ads in the paper saying it's coming, send it and then put ads in the paper asking if they got it. What better way to use public money to publicize a particular party? It's \$1 billion that most people, certainly in rural Ontario—and I concur with the previous speaker, the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, who views it as \$1 billion that should more properly have gone into expenditures.

This government likes to espouse how much it is running the province like a business. What business would overcharge people and then give them the money back after, meanwhile wasting \$3.5 million on postage and administration? The \$200 comes as a result of the people of Ontario being overcharged \$1 billion on their taxes. Certainly, the initial reaction is, "I like the money." Who wouldn't want a cheque sent to them? But that \$200, when it comes to someone, if they need a hospital bed, they can't take that \$200 and get a space in a hospital with it. They can't take that \$200 and get some special education for their child. They can't take that \$200 and get cancer treatment. The strength of that money, the \$1 billion, would come from us collectively delivering the services that the people want. I've not yet heard people in my community say: "You know, the hospital system is too good here. We need to cut back on that." I'm hearing quite the opposite. I'm hearing people talking about being unable to get beds.

Certainly it is a wise political move to give the \$200 back, but the reality for the people of Ontario is that someone pickpocketed our money and now they want

thanks for giving it back to us. I think most would have preferred the money go into something special or simply not be collected. It's grossly inefficient.

The people who are advising the government aren't living in the real world. Unfortunately, the world of politics in Toronto can often not be the real world.

Mr Caplan: Conrad Black.

Mr Parsons: For Conrad Black, it may make some sense to do that.

It would also be nice, though, if we stopped referring to everyone in Ontario as taxpayers, because there are people in Ontario who are not taxpayers but are still citizens. I would prefer we talked about the citizens of Ontario, rather than just taxpayers.

I'm watching where some of the cuts have been made and some of the announcements. I said earlier that the budget was a brilliant piece of public relations, but once you sit down and start to crunch the numbers—

Interjection.

Mr Parsons: Well, I think about some businesses that will advertise on the front cover of their brochure that this particular item this week is \$24.95. The reality is that it has always been \$24.95, or maybe it has been \$23.95.

I started to look in detail at some of the numbers. There's \$1 billion in the budget for provincial highways. Now, is that new money? Well, that was the inference, and that's how it was read, and it was presented so that it would be read that way. But when we actually look at the numbers, it's a little bit less than last year and in fact represents a 7% cut on spending on provincial highways in southern Ontario. These aren't new dollars. Some of these dollars are less than last year.

The SuperBuild fund: Boy, that's inspiring that there's going to be all this money in the SuperBuild fund. But if you take all the capital money that the ministries had in previous years and you put it together, it's actually a little bit less than we used to spend.

Now, I've just committed an error that a lot of citizens in Ontario make when I said "SuperBuild fund." It's actually the SuperBuild Corp. They put some money out—what communities required to produce matching money. Will Toronto have difficulty finding matching money for the redevelopment of the waterfront? No, I don't think so. I think we've got so much money concentrated in this area that they are able to match any money.

What about a small community college in rural Ontario? Will they be able to find the matching funds? With great difficulty and perhaps not at all. So some of that money that's announced for rural Ontario will never actually be spent because of the challenges facing rural Ontario.

I watched some of the impacts by talking to people. I know there are numbers quoted on how we're spending more money than ever, but if we're spending more money, why are there patients in hallways that there weren't five years ago? Why are there children still being kept at home because they have not been approved by the

province for their ISA grant if we're hearing that there's more money?

1700

I was at a presentation by the Ministry of Community and Social Services and got some sense of the government's priorities when I looked at their mission statement, which said that their role was to serve those most in need—not those in need, but those most in need. We wouldn't sit down at a meal with our family and feed those who are the hungriest and not the others. Who defines and decides who's the most in need? What are the criteria? That's scary, because I believe we have a moral obligation as a government to help those in need so that they will no longer need assistance from us at some time, and to recognize for others that we need to permanently recognize them as part of the family and support them. If they live in Ontario, they're Ontarians. We do not go through and prioritize what citizens we think we need to help and what ones we're not going to help.

It's not popular to talk about welfare recipients in the province, but there's been nothing in there to help them. There was an opportunity to cut the gasoline tax to help them look for employment; there was an opportunity to provide some assistance to public transit. Welfare recipients who want to better themselves continue to have the doors closed. This government will not fund municipal transit in any way and yet the people in the lowest economic range need that help. They're the most in need, I believe, and we are failing to recognize that.

The fact is, ignore the figures; look at what's happening in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Ms Martel: In response to the comments that have been made, let me focus on the following. In the budget, it said there was no doubt that health care is the top priority for Ontarians. I believe that, but if I thought it was the top priority for this government, then I would have expected to see a very significant increase in the health care budget this year, especially in light of the fact that this government experienced a \$5.3-billion windfall in revenues from last year that they didn't expect. So you would expect that if the government really thought health care was a priority, health care would have gotten a big chunk of that windfall. As a matter of fact, if you look at the estimates, the total investment in health care for this year over last year is a mere \$49 million. That's it. That's all.

With respect to northern Ontario, I think it's clear to say that the overwhelming concern has to be with the shortage of doctors in our communities. Three years ago we had 68 communities that needed 100 doctors. At present, we have 99 communities on the underserved area list, with a total need of 415 doctors. So it has increased dramatically under this government's watch.

What did this government do in response to this serious issue of doctor shortage in northern Ontario and now in southern Ontario as well? The government announced \$4 million of free tuition for medical students if they agree to practise in the north and in rural

communities after graduation. What does it take, four or five years to graduate from medical school? We need doctors now. I have three underserved area communities in my own riding where we need doctors now, not five years from now.

The other thing that happens under this is that those doctors go back to northern Ontario and to rural Ontario, so there's no guarantee that we're going to get our fair share of those doctors five years from now, even if they decide to come.

Secondly, the minister said there was \$11 million to have new spaces for medical students. We found out last week that that \$11 million was spent last year. There's nothing new for this year. There are no new initiatives to recruit and retain doctors in northern Ontario.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Before I recognize the next speaker, I remind members that interjections are always out of order, particularly if you are not in your own seat, member for Niagara Falls.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise and respond to the comments of my colleagues across the way.

In listening to members of both the Liberal and NDP parties, it strikes me that they are trying to pick holes in the budget from a very specific point of view, whether it be health or rural Ontario. What they have forgotten is the big picture. This is the first time in decades when we've had a balanced budget in the province of Ontario. From the party over here that overspent all the time they were in government, even in boom times, to the party over here that doubled the debt in four years, I would say to the colleagues across the way that I am very pleased to be part of a government that for the first time is not robbing our children of their future opportunities by overspending money we don't have. I am very grateful to be part of a government that is finally living within its means. We have taken priorities very clearly, be they health, be they education, be they infrastructure for the future, and that's where our money is being spent.

This budget is very comprehensive and I particularly like the title the Minister of Finance has chosen. He's calling it Balanced Budgets—Brighter Futures. If you look through this budget document, on every page you will see investments in health care that are going to bring doctors to our underserved areas. I find it fascinating that my colleague from across the way forgot to mention \$600 million in rural economic development initiatives—these are extraordinary—forgot to mention the point-of-sale tax rebate for farm building materials that farmers have been asking for, forgot to mention \$300 million for northern and remote Ontario. These are extraordinary investments that are indeed responsive, because we've been listening.

The key word in this budget that can't be forgotten is "balanced." We've balanced the budget but also in the process of have created 703,000 new jobs in Ontario. That's an extraordinary accomplishment of which I am very proud.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I'm very glad that my colleagues have touched on a number of issues that are of particular concern in health care and particularly in northern health care. Of course, one of the main issues concerning us is the northern health travel grant and the fact that with a \$5-billion revenue windfall this government couldn't find even a few million dollars to restore some equity and some fairness to the northern health travel grant. It's amazing that although the minister today said that there's going to be a review of the northern health travel grants, there's no money to support a review. In fact there's no acknowledgement on the part of the government that there is a basic inequity when southern Ontario residents who have to travel out of their communities to northern Ontario or to the United States to get cancer care have all of their costs of travel reimbursed while northern Ontario residents have a maximum of some \$400-plus. It's amazing that the government is not prepared to recognize even a basic inequity there.

I do want to take this moment to acknowledge that there will inevitably be some financial increase in the spending on the northern health travel grant. It will increase somewhat because the northern health travel grant, such as it is, is going to be extended to residents of Muskoka, because one of the things we discovered in the budget was that Muskoka is now part of northern Ontario. It also happens that Muskoka is part of the new, enlarged riding of the Minister of Finance, so I guess the minister has understood that there are some relatively minor financial benefits if you are defined as a northerner and he's going to make sure that his constituents are going to receive that maximum of \$400 for travel expenses that they may incur. And so be it; we think there should be fairness and equity.

We're a little bit concerned as northerners about what other things in the budget may extend to the new northerners in Muskoka; the transportation budget, for example, which seems to be expanded for northern Ontario but which may now have to cover some very significant highway expansion in the Muskoka area as part of the northern Ontario budget, or it may be the northern heritage—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms Churley: I'm happy to respond to my two Liberal colleagues' comments. I agree with pretty well everything they had to say but I have to remind them and everybody else that the Liberals in Ottawa are gushing over the Harris government budget, a budget which emphasizes tax cuts over investments in health care and child care and education and the environment, on the backs of people who just get a minimum wage. The government refuses to increase that, which would help them participate in this overwhelmingly good economy we're in. Everybody knows it's because of the American economy. God help people if there is a recession under this government. We don't know what will happen to

those people who are suffering now as a result of this budget in very good economic times.

But I do have to remind the Liberals that in fact Finance Minister Paul Martin says that Ernie Eves simply borrowed the federal playbook for their tax cuts budget, and Prime Minister Jean Chrétien said, "The best form of flattery is when a government is copying another government." So here we have a Liberal government in Ottawa and a Conservative government—or should I call it the United Alternative government?—here in Ontario giving tax cuts of over \$5 billion out of the \$8 billion in this budget alone—and that's on top of the tax cuts that were made before the 30% to corporations—to corporations and very wealthy people. In the meantime, no investment in public transportation. Smog season is upon us; people are going to be sick and die. No investments in housing; more and more homeless people. It goes on and on. This government should be ashamed of itself.

1710

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mrs Dombrowsky: I thank my colleagues and those who commented on the remarks that were made from this perspective. I think it's important—I was really rather concerned when I heard the passionate remarks from the member for Guelph-Wellington, who indicated that we failed to look at the bigger picture. I'm sorry, I take from that that the really valid concerns that have come to me from my constituents in rural Ontario aren't part of the big picture. But they are part of Ontario and they are important. The point we're trying to make on this side of the House is that the bigger picture isn't the full picture. That's what we're trying to do here.

I would suggest to the members with regard to the comments that were made in terms of neglecting to talk about those crumbs that rural Ontario received from this government, when you consider the billions and billions of dollars that have been put toward tax cuts, the billions of dollars that are spent on government ministries, rural Ontario—the Ministry of Agriculture—gets 1%. The second-largest industry in the province gets 1% consideration from this government. I'm here today to say on behalf of the people I represent that they deserve more. I make no apologies for that. The money that this government has put towards rural Ontario is a valuable investment, but I'm saying to you, it is not enough. That's what I'm hearing from my constituents and that's what I'm presenting on the floor of this House. To suggest otherwise is really not to know the full picture of the needs of the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr O'Toole: It's my pleasure this afternoon to have a few minutes—I may choose to split some of the time—to comment on Finance Minister Ernie Eves's budget of last week. I gather I won't be, so I'll try to use my time expeditiously.

I think it's important to stop the tone here. We've had a kind of round-by-round, blow-by-blow description of the 67 tax cuts, and that's important. I'm sure subsequent speakers will go through the litany of tax cuts, because as

you know, right now it's 166 different tax cuts since we were elected in 1995.

It goes further than that for my riding of Durham. In my case, I like to draw everything back to my riding and try to understand it from that perspective. It's very important for each of us elected by the people of Durham for a second term to be listening and responsive and respectful to their views. Clearly, they spoke last June 1999 and said we're on the right course. But I have to go back further than that. You have to look at the motive of why we were elected. I think the member for Guelph-Wellington, in her passionate way, said it all. She really realized that the previous two governments—I heard the member for Broadview-Greenwood earlier making a slight reference to the coalition between the Liberals and the NDP. I can't really separate which it was. In fact, it's more simple to say it was both of them. They're not able to stand up to the difficult decisions. They're not up to the job, either one of them. Without being personal, they did have 10 years, and we and most Ontarians refer to the 10 lost years.

If we go back here and spend a bit of time on the motive for change—stay with me; it's very important that you get this from the beginning to the end. I only have 20 minutes, so I need your undivided attention. You can get a copy of Hansard later on, and I'll mail it to you directly if you wish.

I think the motive for change is this: Clearly they were spending—get this—\$1 million an hour. It's an easy way to remember the damage they were doing. They were spending \$1 million an hour, and that was just the interest on the debt they had accumulated, from \$50 billion to \$100 billion; 8,460 hours in a year at \$1 million an hour, and that barely covered the interest on the debt.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Don Valley East will take his seat.

Mr O'Toole: They were spending \$11 billion in deficit.

I remember one afternoon in 1996, I believe—

Mr Caplan: Frank, what's Ontario's credit rating?

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me. The member for Don Valley East. There are too many conversations going on here that have nothing to do with the speaker. I am attempting to hear every word very carefully. You may continue. I am hoping that members will respect.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It's important to try and get the member for Don Valley East to sit, or I'll call his mother and she will provide some response. She knows how to get control.

I would just say that when you get to the motive, you cannot avoid looking at history, otherwise you're doomed to repeat it. That's exactly the whole theory. I have some publications here today but I can pretty well go from memory. The problem with the government—and we've seen Jane Stewart in Ottawa doing the same thing—is they try to solve all their problems by spending money. In fact, there's clear evidence across the country that that's what they're potentially doing as we speak: To

solve a problem they spend money. They don't think through and make the difficult choices.

Going further back—and it makes me sort of melancholy—if you're noticing a slight tear in my eye here, it's because 1941 and 1943 were the last times we had back-to-back balanced budgets. That was the year I was born, so it's very significant for me and it makes me reflect a bit on how far we've come and how far out of control governments were that used to spend their way. Tax and spend became the theory of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Now we've returned to planning a fiscal agenda that keeps the taxpayers in mind. That's very important. It's an economy that really empowers people. Most importantly, it empowers them, instead of some bureaucrat sitting in some ivory tower, to make the spending decisions. It's giving taxpayers back the money that we took from them in the first place.

I want to thank the taxpayers of Ontario. That's really ultimately where we should be looking here. We can thank all the various sectors that have contributed to a healthy economy and a strong recovery, the banking and financial sector and the small business entrepreneur, but it's the hard-working taxpayers that I want to extend a word of thanks and appreciation to, because they stuck with us. They saw the vision, they knew the message, and they had the confidence that we would do as we promised. I believe the election in June 1999 was all about promises made and promises kept. Now we've moved to the forum where it's a responsible government by the people. This budget clearly says that.

The best compliment is imitation; the best form of flattery is imitation. I have a lot of respect for Paul Martin in Ottawa. He came out the very evening of the budget and more or less endorsed some of the exciting ideas that were put forward by Finance Minister Ernie Eves, and he said he's thinking of copying it. He has a challenge before him. I don't think the strength and decisiveness is in their leadership to make those tough decisions, to work with the taxpayers. But I commend Finance Minister Paul Martin for recognizing the dedication, the loyalty and the focus not just of our Premier but of Finance Minister Ernie Eves.

I'm going to stop and maybe repeat that several times. Just think how far we've come together since 1995. Just think about it: \$1 million an hour and now we actually have a surplus. In fact, we're committed to repaying the debt. We're paying down \$5 billion, twice as much as we said during the election plan, and we're way ahead of target there. This is more evidence that promises are kept. We've really got back to the starting point, I would think. We're saying that these commitments to eliminate the deficit are now done and we're on our way to paying down the debt. The job is not done. There's more to be done, that's clear.

1720

I had a budget breakfast the morning after, and out of respect for the people who arranged it, and in cooperation, I want to acknowledge those who participated and some of the remarks that were made. One of the

persons there said, "This budget is not only good for the province of Ontario, it's good for the riding of Durham." This is a general comment.

The next one is from Ron Hope, the president of the Newcastle Business Improvement Association, whom I've mentioned several times here in this House. He says: "Every year we see things getting better and better.... It's going in the right direction for sure." That's a direct quote from a small business person in Newcastle.

Another one is from Adrian Foster, a very well informed financial adviser who lives in the Courtice area. It's a rapidly growing community in my riding of Durham. This is his quote: "Tax cuts are always wonderful. And the decoupling of the provincial and federal sales tax will give a lot more flexibility." There's a small business person who knows the drag that taxes have on the economy.

There are some interesting parts here I may get a chance to go to on the capital gains side. We just went one step further beyond the feds. They went to 66% of capital gains that are taxable; we've gone to 50%. It's clearly because he's giving people their money. What are they going to do with it? If they have money, they're going to save it, invest it or make a purchase. The fellow over there, Mr Levine, is saying, "Pay for tuition." They're actually—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Yes, I will get his name to acknowledge it respectfully. It's the member from Brant, Mr Levac.

I would say, yes, they will be paying tuition, but wherever they choose, instead of government choosing. That's the difference. You have to get the mindset switched around here, member from Brant. You've got to move it such that it's the individual family that's making the decision, not some bureaucrat in Ottawa or at Queen's Park. That's the whole plan here. This is what they're saying, that it's introducing more flexibility.

Some members on the other side might know Mr George Khouri, the president of the Clarington Board of Trade, who had this to say: "This community has a lot of small business," which my riding does. "This is a step in the right direction. Lowering taxes for small business when you have a surplus and another balanced budget keeps the engine going to create new jobs and small business is the biggest job creator." Clearly we all know the evidence that small business creates about 60% of all net new jobs.

That brings me to the clear point. If you look at history, when we had record spending and record deficits we also had record unemployment, we had record people on welfare. Where have we come? You should know that our goals are aggressive and they're assertive, but we intend to work towards achieving them. They are ambitious goals. We should be nothing but the best. We've aimed for 725,000 net new jobs. Over 700,000 new jobs have been created since 1995 by small business, the private sector. Do you know what that means? There are 500,000 fewer people depending on welfare cheques. They now have a payroll cheque. This is about giving

individuals and families respect and dignity. It's about hope and opportunity. It's almost like the founding of a new land when you're coming from the dark ages of the last 10 years.

I would be remiss if I didn't spend some time respectfully responding to the agricultural community in my riding of Durham. I immediately think of Blackstock and Nestleton and Hampton, to name but three. I could name more and perhaps will. Also, it's real people. Jackie Van Eyk and John Van Eyk are pork producers in my riding; Lawrence Van Camp and his wife have a large dairy operation just outside Blackstock; Kirk Kemp, a well-known apple farmer, is also very involved in his growers' association; Charles Stevenson. These people call me with their concerns and they tell me what the agricultural community needs, and everyone here would know how difficult it has been for them, not just in Ontario but indeed across Canada.

This government has known, and our Minister of Agriculture, Ernie Hardeman, is to be commended. He stood up to the federal government. He led the challenge for Ontario farmers to get their fair share of the support payments. I commend him for that because they're real benefits for real people. I'm mentioning here Dave and Leah Frew and their whole family, involved in the agricultural sector in Durham and beyond, because these people grow the food that we eat. Look around. Some of you have eaten the apples that Kirk Kemp has grown or the blueberries that Charles Stevenson has grown. I think of people like Karen and Dennis Yellowlees from the Durham Region Federation of Agriculture. These people are the salt of the earth. They are the ones who led the way. When I think of Durham, a high-growth area, and the pressures on them from growth and urban expansion and some of the changes made by our previous agriculture minister, the Honourable Noble Villeneuve—the Farm Practices Protection Act, the Farming and Food Production Protection Act—they were just excellent and helped these people deal with the issues of municipal bylaw and expansion into rural areas.

What is just, suffice it to say, a small thing, but really amounts to a large convenience for the agriculture sector, is the point-of-sale exemption on the retail sales tax. This goes a long way to eliminating just the red tape alone. When you go into the co-op or whatever the store, you give them your farm number and there's no retail sales tax on that purchase of building materials for the farm.

Recognition goes to some very unusual extent here to look at small-town Ontario. This is something that's been neglected by previous governments. A full \$600 million has been set aside to infuse our rural economy, and \$200 million of this is earmarked for rural economic development. The other \$400 million is used for the infrastructure part, and Minister Wilson today spoke briefly about improving the rural infrastructure so that people can be on-line and connected in this multimedia global village we live in.

There's additional money here for rural and northern communities, but it's all part of helping small-town

Ontario. It's the \$23 million set aside in the transportation budget for the Ministry of Education to allow them in rural and northern Ontario to form partnerships and develop a transportation plan that's more efficient. We've all heard of the old adage of several school buses on the same road. This isn't economically sustainable, so the government has put in place some tools and mechanisms for people to deal with it.

I'm also looking at the transportation. It affects my riding, because of course a lot of my constituents commute to the GTA, different parts of it, north and Toronto mainly. I'm one of them and I know that we need the infrastructure to have a healthy economy. Again, I have to compliment our Minister Turnbull, Minister of Transportation, for insisting at the cabinet table that we have \$1 billion in road dollars.

How does this translate in my area? Well, last year \$10 million was extended to the Durham region for improvement projects and, I might say, a very imaginative partnership with Durham region and the MTO. This will advance ahead of schedule three projects that are absolutely critical to our sustainability: I believe the Stevenson Road interchange probably will be the most important one, but the Lakeridge Road and Pickering Beach Road exits from the 401 are going to allow for a smoother flow of traffic.

I'm surprised that the opposition and the third party haven't mentioned the significant commitment to health care. The history here is clear. We all know that when we were elected it was \$17.4 billion. We know those numbers. And you know that we've committed 20% more and we're going to reach that target two years ahead of schedule. It's going to be over \$22 billion—that despite the federal government pulling out some \$6 billion. Imagine. Say it to yourself several times. It's frightening. They have gone from 50 cents to a mere 11 cents on every dollar.

I paid some respect to Finance Minister Paul Martin, but he missed the ball completely on the health care thing in his last budget. Our Premier and Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer have approached our Prime Minister, and he has refused to meet with them, and yet we're going ahead. We have a vision for health care. We may have to go it alone, but all of Canada is looking to our finance minister, our Premier and our health minister to lead the way for the restructuring and delivery of health care in this country.

In fact, you should put this in perspective. That \$22-billion budget will be the largest in history. I believe it's larger than all but three other provinces' total budgets. We spend more per person on health care, total dollars on health care, than any other province in this country.

730

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: No, more per person, member from Kingston and the Islands—

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: I know numbers are difficult for you.

There are five key areas in health care, and I've got to put it on the record: \$1.5 billion for a drug program, unmatched by other provinces; \$5.9 billion for OHIP; \$7.7 billion for hospitals; \$3.1 billion for long-term care, a growing sector; and \$3.8 billion for other health care initiatives. We provide services in health care that other provinces simply don't have the resources to match.

We shouldn't let the day go by without looking at the importance—as a parent with five children, it makes me stop and think again. It's real people again. What are we doing for children? There's a lot in this budget for helping children, not just the education part—that's reducing class size, that's special education, the speech-and-language money. There's money in there for children at risk. I believe it's \$5 million for children from inner-city schools to participate in sports and summer programming.

There are other speakers who will, I suppose, get into the more mainstream messages. I just tried to bring a bit of history to it, to thank the people of Ontario who were loyal and committed to helping us keep the promises and to publicly thank Finance Minister Ernie Eves and the Premier for having the vision and having the courage to do the right thing, to keep their promises.

I know the evidence is there. The budget is balanced. We now have a surplus. The people of Ontario need to recognize that you have to have a healthy economy to have good education and health care systems. Despite all the pundits who said prior to 1995 that it couldn't be done, that you couldn't cut taxes and increase the growth in the economy, we've done the impossible, and the job is not done.

I appreciate those who have paid attention here today. There is a broad number of people from all parties, which is good. Perhaps they'll pick up on it and do the right thing themselves.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mrs McLeod: I'm sorry that the government is going to close off the debate on the budget within the next half-hour, because I would have appreciated an opportunity to speak and to be able to talk about some of the budget games that were played in this most recent budget. The one I particularly wanted to address is a statement that's found in the document called Building Strong and Safe Communities. It tells us, "The district of Muskoka will now be included in northern Ontario for all government funding purposes." To the best of my knowledge, in all the years I've been involved in this Legislature, nobody considered extending the northern Ontario boundary south of the French River, at least not until that part of Muskoka became part of the new enlarged riding of the Minister of Finance.

My office called the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines to find out why they would want to extend the northern Ontario boundary south of the French River to include Muskoka. My staff were told that since the heritage fund for northern Ontario had been increased and since there had been an increase in northern transportation budgets, it was felt they could extend this

northern Ontario boundary to Muskoka. That is just the most blatant, cynical way of getting money to go into the riding of the Minister of Finance while making it look as though they're responding to the long-standing needs of northern Ontario, a budget game indeed.

It goes hand in hand with the statement in the budget that says this government is going to have new increased medical school spaces, only we find out that there are no new medical school spaces at all, that all the government is doing is referring back to an earlier announcement that would increase the residencies for foreign-trained physicians—all well and good in itself but not the new medical school spaces that this government appeared to be promising in print in the budget. It's a little bit like saying there's \$1.4 billion in new spending for health care, the largest increase ever, except that the government forgets about the one-time funds they've pulled out and the \$1 billion in capital which they're not renewing this year. It all goes hand in hand with what I think is the most innovative part of the budget, and that's the \$1-billion "Your cheque's in the mail" advertising campaign.

Ms Churley: I find it interesting to listen to the member for Durham and other Tory members who chastise the NDP and the Liberals for not pointing out all the good things in the budget; that we're very selective in our comments. I would say to the member that he is extremely selective in what he talks about in the budget. For instance, I don't hear any of the Tories, when they're talking about this budget, mention the environment at all. Why are they not mentioning the environment?

Let me be very selective here for a moment. The total cuts to the Ministry of the Environment now, after previous cuts, is \$100 million. I couldn't believe it when I opened up the budget books in this House and saw another \$16 million cut from the Ministry of the Environment, which brings the total up to \$100 million. That shows their commitment to environmental protection in this province, when we're rolling in money because of the good economy and the US, all of this money coming in.

The minister is in the House now. I'd like to think that he fought for that money, but we all know why he was put in that position, to just toe the government line. The minister even said, when asked a question about the cuts to the environment—the first line written down in his notes in his briefing book and he read it off—"Nothing could be further from the truth," when it's right there in their own budget that this \$16 million is cut.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): That's 40%.

Ms Churley: That's right, 40%, or more, of the ministry cut.

I would like the government to take a good look at the things that we here in the NDP are talking about: the people and the programs on whose backs this budget was balanced—that is very real—the homeless, environmental protection, kids and elderly who are going to suffer from smog now. I'd like them to address those issues.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): I've had an opportunity to go back to my riding and discuss budget 2000 with my constituents. Despite what we hear from the Liberals all the time, my constituents like the budget. It has tax cuts, and it's returning some of their money—up to \$200 for taxpayers in Ontario. The people I spoke to in London-Fanshawe, who go to work every day and work hard for their money, can hardly wait to have this money in their hands so they can spend on their children, whether they want to spend it on clothing, on recreation, on some basic necessities. In typical Liberal form, Liberals feel that they can spend my constituents' money better than they can. Well, I won't allow that to happen. I was sent here on behalf of the people of London-Fanshawe to look after their interests, and that's why we had to cut taxes, to continue the growth.

Do you know what's really interesting? The Liberals call any surplus "a windfall." It came out of nowhere. Let me tell you something. It did come from somewhere. It needed the strong leadership of Premier Mike Harris to cut taxes to grow revenues so we could reinvest in our health care and education. So that's what has been done. Dalton McGuinty simply does not get it, and his members do not get it and clearly are not up to the job of governing in this province.

At another point, I certainly look forward to the opportunity of getting into the details of the budget.

On the weekend, I was here for the police memorial, and police officers from across the province certainly liked the \$35-million grant for policing in their communities that's going to be extended on a permanent basis. This is another part of our commitment to community safety across the province.

1740

Ms Di Cocco: When we talk about the big picture in regard to this budget, it has to do with the sum of the many parts that exist in this province. It's that total picture that the government doesn't seem to understand. The environment is that part of the big picture that they have forgotten. We have eroded our standards in this province when we speak to the environment to a point where we lag. We're way behind those of the United States and we are jeopardizing our future. It is not about bright futures when you don't deal with critical environmental issues.

Public transportation in large centres is one of those areas that would move people and it would alleviate the use of cars and eliminate a lot of smog that we are seeing already in May that normally we'd see in the middle of July and August.

I want to highlight that the social and economic guidance that this budget provides is basically about privatization, because most of the money, \$8 billion worth, is going to be spent on tax cuts. Basically we're talking about privatizing jails, privatizing universities, and I believe that we're privatizing health care by stealth. I've heard that often in a lot of debates outside this House.

Good fiscal management, again, is more than just tax cuts. This government has not paid down the debt. It's added \$10 billion to the debt.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: I only have two minutes. I do appreciate the members responding.

The member from Thunder Bay is a perpetual complainer. I don't know; it's a "sky is falling" syndrome.

The member for Broadview-Greenwood really did speak eloquently about the Liberal-NDP coalition and I recognize her for saying what really exists. That's the opposition.

The member for London-Fanshawe clearly has the right message. He's listening to people.

The member for Sarnia-Lambton is just clearly against tax cuts. That's the Liberal message and I don't blame her for sticking on the message because her leader would put her further back in the backbenches.

Anyway, I think it's important to put on the record a couple of important achievements. I co-chaired the gas price task force and I just thought this was so appropriate, the way Finance Minister Ernie Eves introduced how we're giving a rebate to people on the issue of gas prices. Everyone who drives has insurance and you can see that we've committed to reducing the retail sales tax on automobile insurance. Clearly, this won't go back into the corporate coffers for the giant oil companies. They may be disappointed, but the driving public is getting the money back that they deserve. In fact, the goal here is to eliminate it. One more tax is another benefit that you can see.

I think David MacKinnon from the Ontario Hospital Association was quick to bring forward—a significant step forward.

I would like to put on the record, as the member from Kingston and the Islands would know, that Minister Baird announced \$50 million for helping people with development disabilities. This was announced on May 5 and I'm sure the member from Kingston and the Islands realizes that people and families with children and young adults with disabilities are thankful for the minister to be saying—

The Acting Speaker : Thank you. Further debate?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): In the last five minutes we have left—and it's too bad the debate is being shut off at that point in time—I just want to bring a couple of points forward.

The first one is that government should be all about fairness to all of its taxpayers, to all of its citizens. If there is one thing that this government has been known for for the last five years it is that it's simply not fair to the people who find themselves in the bottom third of the economic scale. That's the end-all and be-all.

The other thought that comes to mind is that here we've had a government that finds out they've got \$5 billion more in the coffers than what they anticipated at the beginning of last year. I say to myself, "What were all those health care ads against the federal government?"

What was that all about? If you really needed the money, why didn't you take some of this \$5 billion and put it into health care?"

I say to myself, "Why is it that only one in three cancer patients, individuals who have been diagnosed with cancer, are getting the treatment within the four weeks prescribed from the time that they have been diagnosed with cancer?" There's something wrong there. Why is it that when we've had all this money around, there still isn't a penny available for social housing? Not a penny has been put into any kind of programs for homelessness. Why is it that even though there may be some new money available, that while we have capital money for universities and colleges in order to deal with the double cohort situation that will be passing through the system in another two or three years, there isn't one extra penny available for operating money? Why didn't they do something about the high tuition increases that students have been suffering from over the last four to five years? Tuitions have increased by 40% to 50%; absolutely nothing.

Why is it that they found \$1 billion to give back to people now? Initially, I thought people would like this kind of thing, and the more I thought about it, the angrier I got. At one time, we used to buy people's votes, or the system did, with mickeys around election time, and now we've taken that system one step further. Now we're giving everybody \$200 back, every taxpayer of the province of Ontario. But it really all boils down to trying to buy people's favour with their own money. I say to the government that if you want to do that, why don't you do it on a monthly basis? It doesn't make any sense when you think that it's going to cost \$3 million to \$4 million just to get these cheques back to people. It is cynical and it is almost contemptuous.

When you look at this budget, is there some good news for some people? Absolutely. If you're a speculator in the stock market or you're getting some stock options, this is a good budget for you. The first \$100,000 that you're going to make this year, you're going to get it tax-free. That isn't fair and it isn't right.

If you're a corporation in Ontario, this is a good budget for you, no question about it, because your taxes are going to decrease from something like 15%. I'll tell you, I have dealt with a lot of small corporations in Ontario over the last 30 years. They've got many complaints about government but they all relate to red tape. There are very few of them who talk about the corporate income tax situation here at 15%. Now, what are you doing to them? You're saying you're going to reduce that to 8%, another \$4-billion giveaway.

With all the problems that we've got in our health care system, that we hear about on a day-to-day basis in this House, in our own constituency offices—the long waiting lists, the treatment that we have to send people to the United States for so that they can get adequate treatment—why wasn't some of that money put into our health care system? Why wasn't some of that money put in our special education system? We all have heard

stories about people who get a special education assistant in a school for maybe an hour a day whereas they used to get one for a whole day. What do we do with these children at the other times? How will they affect the other children in the classes that they are now combined with etc?

The bottom line is, is this budget good? Yes, it's good for some people, but it certainly isn't good for the welfare of Ontarians. It's not a fair budget. It is a giveaway to corporate Ontario. This will come back to haunt these people, there's no question about it, because we have to be fair to all Ontarians. This budget doesn't cut it on that score.

The Deputy Speaker: This concludes the time allocated for debate.

On Tuesday, May 2, 2000, Mr Eves moved, seconded by Mr Harris, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

On Wednesday, May 3, 2000, Mr McGuinty moved that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on May 2, "That this House approves in general that the budgetary policy of the government" be amended by deleting the words following the words "That this House" and adding thereto the following:

"Recognizing that the budgetary policy put forward by the Minister of Finance fails to use today's wealth to secure tomorrow's prosperity, condemns the government for:

"Spending \$200 million less on operating universities and colleges than it did five years ago when higher education is the key to better jobs and a better future for Ontarians;

"Funding our high schools and schools less by breaking its commitment to offset revenue lost to education property tax cuts;

"Failing to modernize front-line health care and demonstrating, as the government's own health reform panel said, that it has no vision for our health care system;

"Spreading any new health care spending so thinly that there is no evidence any aspect of care will improve;

"Claiming it is investing in primary care reform when its deal with the Ontario Medical Association will put that reform off for another decade;

"Cutting the Ministry of the Environment budget another 9%—for a total cut of 40%—when Ontario already has the second-worst environmental record in North America;

"Failing to deliver tax fairness by giving a \$4-billion tax break to corporations, and a \$650-million break for those wealthy enough to play the stock market, but offering little to struggling middle-class and working poor families;

"Spending much more on prisons than on affordable housing when homelessness is increasing;

"Doing nothing to reduce poverty—increasing even as the economy booms;

"Condemning Ontarians to traffic gridlock by abdicating any responsibility for public transportation;

"Failing to balance the budget until after the federal government and every other provincial government but the NDP in BC;

"Adding \$24 billion to Ontario's debt, creating the first 12-digit debt ever in Ontario, a further burden to future generations of Ontarians;

"Therefore, this government has lost the confidence of this House."

On Thursday, May 4, 2000, Mr Hampton moved that the amendment to the motion be amended by adding, following the words "the Minister of Finance fails to use today's wealth to secure tomorrow's prosperity" in the first paragraph, the following:

"and recognizing that the Ontario government's budgetary policy is a carbon copy of the Ottawa Liberals' emphasis on tax cuts over investment in health care and education."

The first question to be decided is the amendment to the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr Hampton's amendment to the amendment to the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it. The question is therefore lost.

The second question to be decided is the amendment to the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr McGuinty's amendment to the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; it will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1753 to 1803.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Conway, Sean G.	Kormos, Peter
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	Larkin, Frances
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	Levac, David
Bryant, Michael	Gerretsen, John	Martel, Shelley
Caplan, David	Gravelle, Michael	McGuinty, Dalton
Christopherson, David	Hampton, Howard	McLeod, Lyn
Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Parsons, Ernie

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time.

Nays

Amott, Ted	Harris, Michael D.	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Palladini, Al
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Tsubouchi, David H.
Eves, Ernie L.	Munro, Julia	Tumbull, David
Galt, Doug	Murdoch, Bill	Wettlaufer, Wayne

Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie

Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John

Wilson, Jim
Wood, Bob
Young, David

Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr Eves's motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I therefore declare the motion carried.

This House stands adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1807.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 21; the nays are 52.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

We now come to the motion of Mr Eves, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 8 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 8 mai 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY), 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (INDUSTRIE DE LA CONSTRUCTION)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 2, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 69, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 in relation to the construction industry / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui a trait à l'industrie de la construction.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I'd like to speak for a few moments with respect to Bill 69, which is known as the Labour Relations Amendment Act (Construction Industry), 2000. Mr Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member from Scarborough Centre.

I wasn't present when the minister addressed the House on this bill. I know he was very thorough and has spent a great deal of time going over the sections in the bill as well as talking about the consultations he's had leading up to it. From his perspective, it would appear there is very little opposition to this bill, and I would hope it would receive support from all sides of the House.

The only area I'd like to spend a bit of time on which is not too far from my riding, is sections 150.1 and 150.2. They contain provisions with respect to reforms to the collective bargaining system in the residential sector and it applies to the city of Toronto and the regional municipalities of Halton, Peel and York. Part of my riding consists of the town of Caledon, which is in the regional municipality of Peel, and so the one particular section which I would like to talk about affects my riding. It specifically affects how housing goes. I find that how housing goes generally speaking is how the economy goes. There are so many areas of jobs, the financial part of that with respect to housing, that if housing is successful, quite often generally speaking the economy is successful. Right now I believe that housing

is successful, particularly new housing, which is what this section deals with.

All sectors have developed these reforms to the benefit of the employer, the unions, the employees, suppliers and all other dependants of the industry, and particularly new home buyers. What this section is trying to do is to prevent the situation that happened between May 1998 and September 1998, when there was a series of six consecutive strikes by various trades. It took place in the residential construction sector in the greater Toronto area. What these strikes did was essentially shut down the new home building industry. It happened because collective bargaining was staggered, as one union would wait for a settlement for another striking union and then establish its own demands based on the earlier settlement. So when employers refused the demands of the next union, there would be another strike.

This affected particularly new homes that were being built and they simply weren't finished. I can tell you that people who sell their homes to move to a newer home have no place to live. They have to store their furniture. Sometimes you can't even arrange for interim financing because you can't legally move into the house if the house isn't completed. Anybody who has been through that experience of buying a new home, that does happen from time to time, just because of shortage of materials or unusual things, and there is nothing you can do about it. But these strikes literally put new homeowners in these areas at a great disadvantage. They suffered unnecessary inconvenience and substantial expense.

As well, there would be manufacturers, suppliers and other industries, as a result of this series of strikes—from May to September is a long time in this industry. It was like a domino effect. These other related industries were forced to lay off staff. As a result, there was a negative impact on Ontario's economy, and it undermined this government's efforts to create a positive business climate for investment and job creation. It had a major, profound effect on the whole economy of the province.

The Minister of Labour—I believe it was Mr Stockwell, or his predecessor; I'm not too sure, but the Minister of Labour—appointed a special officer to work with all parties in the residential construction sector to develop a solution to avoid this situation so it wouldn't happen again. The officer met with employer representatives and union representatives, and the parties simply weren't able to come up with a consensus solution.

After the special officer's appointment ended, ministry officials continued meeting with employer and union rep-

representatives, developing reforms based on support from the majority of the industry, and this model would be put in place only for the next round of collective bargaining. But generally speaking, it would appear that both the union and employer sides are supporting the amendment that is being proposed.

This legislation, if passed, as I said, would affect those municipalities that I indicated. It would reform collective bargaining in order to minimize the risk of consecutive strikes similar to the ones I referred to that occurred in 1998. Agreements for all the trades would expire at the same time, April 30, 2001. Negotiations for all trades would then take place concurrently. Lockouts and strikes would be limited to a specified time frame of May 1 to June 15, 2001. After that, any unresolved disputes would go to arbitration. So this process, these amendments, would create major certainty as to how the industry would conduct itself in the future.

The following amendments, which have been given and I'm going to refer to them again, will be proposed in this legislation: that all collective agreements that are in effect when the act comes into force would come into effect before April 30, 2001, and would be deemed to expire on April 30, 2001. Since negotiated settlements are encouraged, normal collective bargaining procedures would remain in place. The parties would still have to give notice to bargain, commence bargaining and apply for conciliation in the standard manner. So if an impasse is reached, no-board would have to be obtained from the Minister of Labour, and it would lead to a strike-lockout situation. Any strikes during this round of bargaining would end on June 15, 2001. Those are some of the amendments.

It would apply only to the 2001 round of collective bargaining in the residential sector. It would be evaluated by the workplace parties and the Minister of Labour to gauge its effectiveness for use in the succeeding rounds of bargaining. However, the common expiry date for collective agreements will remain a permanent feature of labour relations in the residential construction sector in the Toronto area.

This is the only section that I will be referring to. I can tell you, as one who has had a little bit of experience in acting for people who have purchased new homes, believe me, if that sort of situation happened again, the amount of inconvenience and the amount of money that's lost to individuals who are purchasing new homes, the amount of loss to the suppliers and the manufacturers and the people who work in those various related industries—it simply can't happen again. So I congratulate the Minister of Labour for bringing this section forward, because it will provide the certainty that's required specifically for new homes.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have particular pleasure in rising in the House today to speak in favour of Bill 69, the Labour Relations Amendment Act. Like my colleague from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, I want to begin by congratulating the Minister of Labour on the tremendous consensus that he

was able to negotiate. We know that it's never easy to come up with an agreement that all stakeholders can find acceptable. Believe me, do I know that. This bill is a testament to the hard work and dedication of this minister, and I reiterate my congratulations to him.

In the throne speech of last October we made many commitments to Ontarians. Today, less than six months later, we've managed to fulfill a great number of those commitments. The Minister of Finance has delivered the balanced budget and tax cuts that we promised. The Attorney General has been very busy. He successfully guided the Safe Streets Act, the Sergeant Rick McDonald Memorial Act and Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry) through the Legislature. Health care spending is being increased as promised and new mental health legislation has been introduced. A code of conduct for Ontario schools has been developed, and the SuperBuild Growth Fund is providing our post-secondary institutions with much-needed capital to expand their capacities.

Bill 69 represents the fulfilment of yet another throne speech commitment, and that is to modernize and improve labour relations in the construction industry. The construction industry is a key industry to Ontario and its economy. Tens of billions of dollars a year are generated through this industry. A large portion of the 700,000 net new jobs created in the province since the Mike Harris government came to power has been created by the construction industry and its spinoffs.

In my own riding of Scarborough Centre we've witnessed an astounding amount of development. New residential housing units are being constructed throughout the riding. Thousands of new units are springing up around the Scarborough Town Centre alone. Commercial construction is on the rise as well. The Scarborough Town Centre has added a large addition, Cedarbrae Mall has undergone an ambitious expansion and renovation program, and the Kennedy Commons shopping complex has been built. Those three developments alone helped to create 1,500 new construction jobs as well as over 2,500 permanent jobs in the businesses that now occupy these complexes. It is vital to the continued prosperity of all Ontarians, not just those in the construction industry, that we create an atmosphere that allows the industry to thrive and continue to play an important part in the remarkable economic boom that we are now experiencing.

That is why the Labour Relations Amendment Act is so important. Bill 69 will help provide that environment for success that the construction industry so desperately requires. In developing this bill, the minister has managed to arrange an agreement with both the unions and the employers, something that is almost unheard of in labour relations. This bill is not a government initiative but rather a solution developed by the industry's key stakeholders. The bill before us is as a result of the give and take that we see in most negotiations. The result is a solution that both sides believe they can live with and a solution that is both workable and realistic.

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I know that members on both sides of the House recognize that strikes are very disruptive to economic activity. I suppose that's part of the reason members of the opposition parties supported the failed Days of Action strikes that tried in vain to cripple growth and prosperity in Ontario just a mere few years ago. From May to September 1998, the residential construction industry in the GTA was plagued by a series of strikes. The negative impact that these strikes had on home buyers, builders, union workers, suppliers and municipalities is almost immeasurable. The solution contained in Bill 69 would reform collective bargaining to minimize the risk of consecutive strikes such as these. Collective agreements for all trades would expire at the same time. Negotiations for new agreements would take place concurrently. Lockouts and strikes would be limited to a specific time frame. If negotiations failed, the dispute would be sent to binding arbitration. The aim of these measures is to create a stable labour environment for the residential construction sector in the GTA.

The bill also addresses the issue of union competitiveness in local markets. This was identified as one of the most important issues for the union side of consultations. Current province-wide collective agreements have placed unionized contractors and sub-contractors at a competitive disadvantage in some local markets. Wage rates and contract provisions have priced unionized contractors out of many local markets. These contractors are locked into agreements that have made them uncompetitive with non-unionized builders. The result has been the loss of employment for a large number of unionized workers. Bill 69 has created a reasonable middle ground that has been developed by the stakeholders in the industry. The industry-developed solution includes changes to legislation to allow local employer groups and unions to develop local amendments to province-wide agreements. Unions and employers will be encouraged to negotiate mutually beneficial adjustments. An arbitrator may be brought in to help ensure that this process is a quick one.

The reality is that prolonged disputes are not good for anyone in this industry. These amendments should allow unionized employers to bid more competitively for projects, thereby creating more opportunity for employment for union workers.

Bill 69 will also increase employer flexibility when it comes to hiring workers. Employers in every sector of the economy must have confidence in their employees. This is no different in the construction industry. This bill will allow contractors to hire people in whom they have confidence by opening up local jobs to a limited number of workers from outside the hiring hall. This would not affect existing restrictions on hiring non-union labour.

Labour peace in the construction industry is key to the continued economic growth we are currently experiencing in Ontario. Quite obviously that is not something that the opposition understands. But labour peace can only truly be achieved when both the employer and union are satisfied with the conditions in which they must

operate. That is why the consensus built by Minister Stockwell is so important.

I know that this may well be an impossible task, based upon the heckling that I keep getting from the member from Kingston, but I do indeed encourage every member of the Legislature to support this industry-developed solution.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions or comments?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I was wondering how long it was going to take the member to get to the bill. She seemed to talk about everything else, about all the so-called wonderful things, in her mind, that this government is doing in this budget, which reminded me of the \$200 rebate that the government—

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: She didn't talk about the bill, and she made these points—about the \$200 rebate that we're all getting. With everything that is going on in health care and education and all the chaos that has reigned in those areas over the last five years, why didn't the government just take that money and put it in the much-needed health care and education systems?

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: If you were here the last time and you heard me speak on this bill, you know quite well where I stand on it.

In any event, why was this money, the \$1 billion, not put into, for example, cancer care? One out of three people in this province who have been diagnosed with cancer do not get treatment within the prescribed four-week period of time. That is a shame, that's an indictment on our health care system and it's a situation this government could have done something about. They had \$5 billion in excess revenue.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In this type of debate, I believe it is the custom to stick to the issue of the bill that's before us, not to have general debate. This is not a budget debate.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order. I was listening to the member, and I thought he was doing—

Mr Gerretsen: The member seems to have a problem when he hears the truth being expounded from this side of the House.

Why aren't you more concerned about the health and safety of our workers, rather than attacking the unions in this province? It is totally and absolutely uncalled for.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was upset that the member from Kingston did not get the chance to finish his flow of speech. He had 37 seconds left on the clock, and it was practically all used up by the useless point of order. I'm wondering if the clock could be restored to the 37 seconds.

The Deputy Speaker: As in a lot of things in life, the world keeps turning, the sun keeps moving and there is no way of going back and doing something. There's no

possible way. I don't know how to run that clock. I can't put it back on. I'm sorry.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I ask unanimous consent to give the member 12 more seconds.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there consent for 12 more seconds? Agreed.

Mr Gerretsen: This government has already attacked the opposition in every way possible. I'm absolutely aghast at the fact that a minister of the crown would not allow a member of the opposition to have their say in the two minutes we're given.

In any event, rather than attacking the unions, which everybody knows you're doing on this, why don't you put more money and more of your resources into the health, welfare and safety of the union members? This is absolutely disgraceful.

The Deputy Speaker: The members will know that it's not allowed for you to be yelling back and forth across. We'd like to have you in with us for the whole of the evening. You might take that as a little bit of a warning.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Let me say that given the fact that the Minister of Labour was so quick to pop to his feet to be fair in a procedural matter, it almost makes me wish that we had campaigned to have him remain as the Speaker, where I think he was very fair. I've said that before and will always say that. That is certainly not something that can be used to describe Bill 69, because it's anything but fair. The fact of the matter is that for the balance of this evening and the balance of the discussion tomorrow, we're going to have government member after government member stand up and follow the lines printed for them, touting all the wonderful things that are in Bill 69, the minister of course will continue to say, "Process doesn't matter; motivation doesn't matter," and we in the NDP will continue to articulate the fact that there is nothing in here that the unions wanted. It's only here now, and if some of them are agreeing with it, it's because the minister of the day did indeed put a loaded political gun to the head of the labour movement and said—

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Ms Mushinski: That's rubbish.

Mr Christopherson: To the member whose time we're commenting on, Ms Mushinski, who said, "That's rubbish," I say through you, Speaker, it's not rubbish. That is exactly what happened, and you can put your head in the sand and pretend that didn't happen and hold your breath and stamp your feet and say, "No, no, no, no," but the fact of the matter is, that's exactly what happened.

The only reason there's any support at all, as weak as it is, I might add, for this from labour leaders is because the alternative was so much more deadly, more devastating to the labour movement. That's the reality. The removal of 1(4) was not a laughing matter, I'd say to the doc across the way, who's laughing during all this. There's nothing funny about Bill 69.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's certainly a pleasure to respond to the elegant speeches made by the member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey and the member of Scarborough Centre. They brought the point forward about consensus and what a great job the Minister of Labour has been doing to get a consensus to bring labour and the employers to the table and to get an agreement for the benefit of the homebuyers here in Ontario. Certainly we can all share that feeling of frustration, when you put money out for a home and you've either sold your old one or you've cancelled the rent on your apartment and then, lo and behold, it wasn't built. It must be extremely frustrating, and they expressed that extremely well, about the give and take and the finding of the middle ground. As I read this bill, it's just absolutely an exceptional bill.

But I thought some of the comments the member from Kingston and the Islands made were interesting. I thought he'd be interested in some of the things that must have happened while he was mayor of Kingston, because obviously he wasn't looking after things very well. I read a headline in the Kingston Whig-Standard from March 1, "24 Million Litres of Raw Sewage Intentionally Pumped into the River," and it goes on to say, "The dumping happens when the city's old and frail sewer system can't handle flows or when there's electrical failure."

He was the mayor of Kingston when that old and frail system was there and should have been replaced, and what did he do? Nothing. Typical of a Liberal, and he must have been practising, when he was mayor of Kingston, to become a Liberal: Just sit back, do nothing, watch it all happen. Now that he's up here, he probably tries to blame the Ministry of the Environment for the lousy system they have in Kingston—his legacy, the legacy he has left for the city of Kingston. He should be ashamed of himself, just as the rest of the Liberals should be ashamed of themselves for the kind of response they had to the excellent budget that we brought in.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'd like to make two minutes of comments about the presentation of the member across the way of what they deemed Bill 69 to be. The reality is that there are very many shortcomings in this legislation that we have to address, hopefully through amendments. Certainly one that I'm most concerned about, and I'll put it on the record—the minister knows because we've spoken, and I mentioned it in the House last week—is the review period with regard to Bill 69.

Listen, what you're saying to the construction people across Ontario is: "If we haven't gotten it right, we're going to get it right. We're going to do you in in the review period." I would suggest, if the government is interested in allowing for some stability within the construction industry, that they withdraw that provision of the review. I would suggest to you that it serves the industry in a very negative way. I'll put it on the record this evening that I will be putting this in the form of an amendment. I would hope that the government accept the amendment. The minister is saying that it's going to

happen. Well, you know what? We won't know that it's going to happen until we go clause-by-clause and accept amendments. This legislation is going to be passed. There's absolutely no question about that. You have a majority government. It's very important that you try to correct some of the weaknesses the opposition members have pointed out with regard to this legislation. I'm concerned about the review period being in there. I hope that my amendment will be accepted and that that is removed from the legislation.

I also have some concerns with regard to the mobility issue. Again, I spoke to that in my leadoff and I will address that in the form of an amendment, and I would hope that the minister would say "Done" as well. However, I won't ask him to say that this evening. There are opportunities to improve what I consider to be faulty legislation. Hopefully, everyone in this House will take those opportunities.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey has two minutes to respond.

Mr Tilson: I'd like to respond to the various members who have responded to the two government members' presentations this evening. The member from Kingston and the Islands is always entertaining. We have no idea what he is talking about. He was talking about health care where this is a labour bill. He says we're always attacking him. Yes, we're always attacking him, quite frankly, because he doesn't make any sense. This is a labour bill. We have a serious problem of stability in that particular area of the labour industry and this member is talking about something that has nothing to do with that topic.

The member from Hamilton West said that we're not fair over on this side. As I indicated in my comments, one of the things we're trying to resolve, particularly as a result of the strike that occurred in 1998, is the great loss that occurred to new home buyers. There was tremendous loss and inconvenience put to the suppliers of materials for new homes and all of the related industries, and that shouldn't happen. This is one of the things the minister is trying to do to solve that situation.

I might add that there is no loaded gun. That's an expression we've heard come out of the opposition and I have no idea what they're talking about with respect to that.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): They had that when they had the social contract.

Mr Tilson: They have a loaded gun with everything.

With respect to the member from Northumberland, he made a comment that there is give and take with respect to discussions the minister has had with the different sectors. I know the minister has spent a considerable amount of time consulting with the different interests in the industry and I believe that has been talked about in this House in the past. It was interesting listening to the member from Northumberland talking about the former mayor of Kingston and his contribution at that time.

The member from Sudbury indicated that there was a possibility of his voting in favour of it. He's going to put

amendments forward and we'll consider those amendments.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): This bill is a little bit different from the ones we've had before the Legislature before. It reads, "Bill 69, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 in relation to the construction industry." I think the Minister of Labour has let us down on this one. It does not have a cute title. All the others have a cute title. I would suggest it could be "An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act in order to annoy both employers and employees." I think that would probably be truth in advertising. I'm disappointed that there's a deviation from the cute name syndrome.

Just before I get into the serious material, I will be sharing my time with the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North.

The attitude of this government has been very consistently antagonistic. I found that the Toronto Star, as I'm sure all of you did when you read this paper on the weekend, a strong Conservative paper, noted, in their profile of the Premier, "In 1962-63 as a grade 12 student, Harris listed 'bowling, curling and antagonizing' as favourite activities in the Northland Echo." Those aren't my words and those aren't the Toronto Star's words. Those are the words Premier Harris submitted to his year book to best reflect his interests: "bowling, curling and antagonizing." I think all of Ontario would appreciate it if he had a lot more interest in bowling and curling than he does in antagonizing right now. I think this bill truly was put together to antagonize all the groups. "If we can make everyone unhappy, then we're reflecting the Conservative agenda in Ontario."

It is rather dangerous in a way for someone to speak to a bill involving unions. We have created an aura in Ontario that it is not politically wise to defend or be at all supportive of people who are in dire straits and require welfare. It's not wise to publicly say something that is supportive of teachers and it's not wise to say something that is supportive of unions. But the reality is that unions have served and continue to serve a very important role in this province, as do the employers who are named in this.

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Interestingly, it's the union side that is presented as the special interest group. We hear about union bosses. That was a wonderfully unique phrase that some backroom person came up with, "union bosses," as if they absolutely controlled the union with no democracy present. Yet the most powerful special interest group in this province is—now I'm not sure whether to say the Conservatives, the Conserve-a-Tories, the Alliance or what exactly we're talking about, but that is by far the most powerful special interest group that has ever been fielded in this province. They have done well for the group of people that has supported and stroked them, not the average Ontario resident but this special group. It has given to me a real insight into the strength and power that

occurs when you get a group of bullies together. It is a reminder of back in school days—rather intimidating.

Nobody in Ontario is the enemy. Things need not be done with confrontation. I believe we need to respect our unions in what they've done and what they continue to stand for. If we look around Toronto right now, it is very encouraging to see the number of cranes that are in place, because cranes are a very strong symbol that the construction is taking place.

Interjections.

Mr Parsons: It's easy to applaud and talk about the development firms that are doing the construction, but let's talk about the people who are actually doing it themselves, the people on the job doing the construction who, in large firms, are represented by unions, unions that have been democratically elected. In spite of the money spent last year and the phrases about union bosses, the reality is that union leaders are democratically elected by their members, exactly the same as the people in Ontario elect a government. They have an opportunity on a regular basis—more often than the provincial government—to change their leadership if they disagree with it. It is a true democracy all the way through. It's not a group of individuals driving the union, but the union is a voice for a collective group of individuals speaking for their members.

In my role as the critic for skills and training, I've had the opportunity to get more familiar with unions, to tour their various facilities and some of their construction jobs. I have found it a learning experience. The union dues each member pays are not, as so often portrayed by the government, going to union bosses for their fat salaries, but I've seen facilities where they provide supports for their retired members. I've seen training schools operated by the unions that are absolutely inspiring with their commitment to their members and to the population they serve.

It is significant for me as we look over history that the majority of safety measures that have been developed in the construction industry have come about as a result of unions speaking up for their members. If we go back to the late 1800s and the early 1900s, whether we're talking construction or we're talking railway, the accident rates were horrendous. Human life was not valued. The unions, collectively, brought together a voice and made suggestions that resulted in a safer environment.

I also recognize that in Canada we have a rather unfavourable climate over the winter. I see construction people out working in absolutely bitter weather. The testimony that they've done a good job is that while in parts of the world we see buildings collapse, we see buildings catch fire and then absolute catastrophe as the flames spread through the building, we enjoy a safe environment in this province—our bridges don't fall down and our buildings don't fall down—because of the commitment of unionized workers to the project. The unions, if nothing else, when they have made the workplace environment safe for them, the building of the

bridge eventually becomes safe for everyone in the province.

But the negotiations that the Minister of Labour is so proud of were not on a level playing field. There was always a threat dangled to remove even more rights from the unions.

I compliment the union executives involved in these negotiations for reaching a compromise that certainly isn't in their best interests, but reaching a compromise knowing the alternatives they faced if they didn't co-operate with this government. It must have been a very stressful and a very unhappy time for them to see some of their members' rights taken away, knowing there was a big club threatening them. I respect the agreement they came out with, but it must, as I said, have been very difficult for them to do.

I am concerned about the issue of mobility. I represent a rural riding. Jobs are not as common in rural Ontario as they are in the 905 area. When we see more automobiles produced in this area, that generates an additional need for buildings to produce them, but in rural Ontario we have not benefited fully from this. I now see the risk of jobs in my community being put at risk by people being moved out of an urban area into it. I suspect, at the same time, that people who are working in an urban area really don't want to move for a job, be away from their family, be away from their support system to do a job.

The system wasn't terribly broken, except for one thing, and I'll mention that in a minute. We're hearing about the prosperity in Ontario in the absolute best of times. Obviously it was working, so why are we going to change it when the construction industry is enjoying the best years they've had in quite some time? Why do we change it? I believe the absolute goal or dream of this government would be to have everyone in Ontario working for minimum wage for an American employer. That's not going to happen all at once, but the government can move towards it in steps.

This is a step that lowers the wages for highly trained, highly skilled, highly responsible people. We need to recognize that every job in Ontario is important. The doctor who does a skilled operation in this province contributes immensely to our society, but the individual who builds the bridge or the individual who loads the garbage truck in front of our home does a service that contributes as significantly to it. We are the sum of the whole. Some are not better than others, and yet we see an attack, and a continued attack, on certain groups, such as unions, to lower what was a decent wage in order to help special interest groups benefit with lower costs.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Thank you to my colleague for allowing me some time to make some remarks tonight as well. There are a number of aspects to the bill that I have some concerns about and I do want to express them. If I can, I'd like to focus on the aspect of safety in the workforce something that is very dear to me, and I trust it is to all members of the Legislature.

There are literally aspects of Bill 69 that I think threaten worker safety. My colleague from Sudbury has made reference to some of the amendments he will be bringing forward to try to alter that. I think they are reasonable amendments we will be putting forward, from the point of view of the fact that if you are in a position where—as I think most people who have read the legislation understand, if an out-of-town contractor manages to get a job in Thunder Bay, they are allowed to bring 40% of the workforce from out of the city to work there; the mobility clause. On top of that, they're allowed to name 60% of the remaining workforce that's left over; in other words, basically bringing it up to 75% total.

The concern we have with that, and it has been expressed by others, is that if a contractor is allowed to choose and to name the individuals they want to bring up, the possibility exists that they will—I think probably more than a possibility—choose people they consider to be co-operative and perhaps those who will best work for us, which doesn't always mean those people who are best for the job. It can on occasion mean people who have been less disruptive to them in terms of them getting the job done as quickly as they want, which I think brings in safety considerations.

One of the realities of the workforce in our province is that the rate of accidents with a non-union workforce is three times—295% I believe exactly—that of a union workforce. I don't think we can ever treat that as being a minor issue. We have had so many tragedies over the years. We certainly have people of all ages who have, as a result of a lack of safety on the workforce or a lack of awareness, lost their lives. We certainly have an extraordinary number of injuries every year. I have tried to play a part in helping that improve by bringing forward my own private member's bill, Bill 10, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students. To be fair to the minister, I am working very closely with the minister and the assistant deputy minister in the labour ministry. We're working on hopefully bringing that bill to fruition, and the principles are agreed upon by the minister.

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In that the minister has been so supportive of that legislation—it has passed second reading, and I'm grateful to all three parties in the House for helping that get past second reading—I think it's all the more important for the minister to perhaps acknowledge that there are aspects of Bill 69 that will basically make the workplace potentially a far less safe place. So one would hope he would recognize that that is a concern.

As the transportation critic, I certainly will be castigating the Minister of Transportation, most frequently because of safety issues. We've been very concerned about that over this past winter. We have been very concerned about the issue of the privatization of road maintenance. We've been very concerned about the fact that a lot of the improvements that need to be made on the roads are not being made in as timely a way as they should or aren't happening at all.

While we have this government bragging about the budget being this, that or the other thing, we still have the greatest concerns about safety, because ultimately that's probably our largest responsibility, to be concerned about the safety of the public. One would hope the government would feel the same way.

With this legislation, I do think there is that particular aspect, and the naming aspect is the one that one can't help but be drawn to. There is a reason why a non-union workforce tends to have a higher rate of accidents than a union workforce. We all know that the unions put a great deal of money into worker health and safety. I have worked with them very closely over my five years as a provincial member, and I've always been very impressed with that being a priority.

In fact, it was Ross Singleton from the Ontario Network of Injured Workers and Steve Mantis from the Canadian Injured Workers Alliance, who are in Toronto today actually meeting in relation to my bill, who put it forward. These are injured workers who have a lot of grievances with this government and have been very unhappy about a variety of legislation that has gone through the House—and I certainly can outline some of it—which also perhaps speaks to some of the concerns that we all have in terms of believing that this legislation is absolutely the best when one looks at the history. They are people who have had very strong feelings about the direction this government is taking, yet they decided the priority for them was to try to put forward legislation that can improve safety in the workforce by educating young people.

We believe that if there is a standard all across the province, that if indeed there are health and safety programs that will be able to go into every school in this province, ones that will mean if you and your family have to move from Thunder Bay to Sudbury or from Barrie to North Bay, you'll know there will be the educational programs in place that can help you—they very much believe that the priority is safety, perhaps sometimes even over the politics that we all get involved with down here.

That is certainly an aspect that I hope the minister will listen to, and we are very concerned about that. It just should be number one. There should be no question about it. So, as I say, while I appreciate the minister's co-operation so far in terms of my private member's Bill 10, which I still believe should be put through as legislation, although there may be some reluctance for the government to do that, but I still believe they should, I think he needs to recognize that there are aspect of this bill that actually will perhaps end up damaging all the good that could be done with the passage of that particular bill.

Also there's no question that if one looks at just the mobility clause itself—40% I believe is the figure that the out-of-town contractors are allowed to bring on to the job—like many parts of this province, our construction workers have not had a lot of work in the last five years, and in every community across the province we want to

get them back to work. We would like to think there would be more opportunity for them. Ultimately when you put the 40% with the 36%, you're left with about 24% who can be employed through the local union office. We want to get those numbers up. So I hope the minister would give some consideration to that as well.

The issue of competitiveness is one that I don't think can be ignored either. This is a piece of legislation that ultimately will result, and I think the minister did acknowledge this on second reading, in workers making considerably less money. It sets up a situation where that's the case. I think again—although government members tend to get angry when we say this and they can continue to do so—that this was simply something that was put in place because of the fact that there was a gun put to their head to some degree. It was going to be coming. The elimination of section 1(4) was one that indeed was there, and I think those who were supporting it recognized they had to accept this compromise.

The issue of competitiveness is one that really concerns us all. How will you define that? How will you monitor that? How will you practise it? Those are some of the issues that concern me very much.

I want to also just have the government understand, and perhaps the minister too, that the history of legislation by this government over the last five years has been one clearly geared at attacking the union movement and workers in this province with a variety of legislation that has been hurtful, has taken away a lot of their rights and certainly made it more difficult for them to trust the government. So when you put it all together—and I named some of the concerns and I trust the minister will take some of my considerations seriously and those of my colleague the member for Sudbury in terms of the whole naming issue, the whole mobility issue.

I'll wrap up my remarks by simply coming back to that point. We obviously want to have more jobs in this province. We obviously want to have an opportunity for our economy to prosper, but we must never ever do it at the risk of worker safety. I think there are aspects of this legislation that simply make that more likely to happen. I can think of no other area right now that probably upsets me or concerns me as much as that. Again, it's important that that be recognized by the government, that while on the one hand you're being supportive of our moves through Bill 10, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students, the fact that the contractors can name that other 36%, which means they're going to name people they feel will be less disruptive, perhaps more likely to co-operate, is an issue that cannot be minimized. I hope that will be taken seriously by the minister, recognizing that there are other issues that I'm sure my colleagues will get an opportunity to bring up. I hope the minister will listen to those amendments when they are put forward by our colleague the labour critic from Sudbury.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Christopherson: I will comment on the remarks of the member for Prince Edward-Hastings who did the

first 10 minutes of the 20-minute spot. Again, he raised the issue of why these negotiations were taking place. I think it's important that all of us on this side of the House talk about that when we have the floor, because the government continues to say, first of all, that it didn't happen, and then that it doesn't matter. Both are incorrect. It did happen. In fact, I can't imagine how any of the labour leaders would possibly justify their support of Bill 69 in the absence of the threat that the government, through the Minister of Labour, made to them in terms of section 1(4), because this is not an improvement in the conditions for workers. The people who work in the construction industry are left with fewer rights and opportunities than they had before.

The minister will make his arguments, stating that these things had to happen, and competitiveness, and that's fine, let him do that. The reality nonetheless is that in Alberta they removed the equivalent of our section 1(4), and anyone who talks to someone who works in the construction industry in Alberta will tell you that it's a nightmare compared to the way it used to be. There are people on the same construction site who are working one day for union wages over in this corner of the work site and the very next day they're working on another part of the work site—the same work site, a different part—making 30% to 40% less money. Why? Because they ended up going down the road that we would be going down if 1(4) was removed. That's why the threat was made. That's why the labour leaders are agreeing to this, under serious duress.

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Hon Mr Stockwell: I just want to comment quickly on the comments made by my friends opposite.

I'm not really certain where the safety aspect would come into it. There's no difference after this legislation than before this legislation with respect to safeness of work sites in the construction industry. There are no amendments or changes or regulations that have changed that would decrease the safeness of those work sites. In fact, we're being very proactive to create a safer construction work site, because there are some improvements we can make. If you want to enlighten me, I'm more than happy to hear, and if you want to comment in your two minutes I'd be happy to listen as well, but I'm not really sure where that would happen.

I hear about the concerns opposite with respect to the issue. There seems to be an acceptance that the status quo wasn't working. There wasn't competitiveness in the construction industry, and I think why the labour leaders were in favour of looking at reviewing this act was because they weren't winning work. Fundamentally, they had hiring halls with 400 people where 50 and 60 were working rather than 250 and 300 who were working in days gone by. So the compelling and overriding reason the construction industry unions came to the table was that they were getting fewer and fewer jobs out there. That's why they addressed the situation. That's why they came to the table to discuss it.

I understand that there is negativeness opposite; I hear it. I don't hear any corrections, though. I don't know how you would have gone about making changes that would have done anything different. How would you have fixed this problem? The problem was faced by the Liberals and the NDP in office and nothing was done. Slowly but surely there was a depression in the union workers out there. It wasn't dealt with. If we take the NDP's approach to union negotiations, the social contract, it's simply an approach where you force them to accept changes, and if they don't accept the changes then you ram the legislation through against their will.

We're in a different situation. I think there is a jealousy there that we didn't in fact go out and ram this through, force it down unions' throat, that they accepted it. I understand why you're jealous, because we brought the parties together and forged this agreement. You couldn't do it in the social contract. I appreciate—

Mr Christopherson: Don't tell a little lie. Tell a big one.

Hon Mr Stockwell: That's out of order, Mr Speaker. I would ask the member from Hamilton West to withdraw that. That's out of order.

The Deputy Speaker: If the member from Hamilton West would like to withdraw, that would be fine.

Mr Christopherson: Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: If you made a remark that was unparliamentary, you may withdraw it.

Mr Christopherson: Did I make a remark that was unparliamentary? If you tell me I did, I'll gladly withdraw it, sir.

The Deputy Speaker: It isn't my privy to tell you what you said. I just said that if you did, then this would be the opportunity. If it isn't, that's your call.

Mr Christopherson: If I did, then I certainly do withdraw it.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The Chair recognizes the member for Sudbury.

Mr Bartolucci: I thank the members from Thunder Bay-Superior North and Prince Edward-Hastings for their comments. I believe it's very, very important that all members of the House listen carefully to what they said.

With regard to safety, though, let's just spend a few moments on that and see how the new division allows the employer to minimize the safety that I think we on all sides of the House want. For example, there is the 40% nobility issue. That means the employer can take 40% of the jobs with him to a particular work site outside of the area. Then he can name 36%. So that means that 76% of the workforce is going to be controlled effectively by the employer.

If in fact we have some employers who don't follow all the safety standards that are in place, and someone is proactive with regard to safety and challenges the employer, I guarantee you, I guarantee the members across the way, that that worker who is safety conscious will never work for that contractor again on another job. I think over time you erode the safety aspect in the construction industry, and I know Sergio Morasut, my

bricklaying foreman when I was a labourer, would be concerned about that, as we are on this side of the House. I'm sure the members of the NDP and the Conservative Party are concerned about that. We have to address that and hopefully will be able to address that in amendments that the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North is going to be instrumental in drafting because he has so many ideas. So I would say that's one area where safety may be minimized over the course of time, and I think it's worthy of address in the legislation under amendments.

I would also suggest that as time goes on, the key man provision is also an area that warrants some concern and some discussion and hopefully amendments which will be accepted.

Mr Galt: I was quite entertained by the two presentations from the official opposition party. The member from Prince Edward-Hastings talked about no cute title in this particular bill. I can't imagine any bill that we've ever put forward that didn't have a very serious title and describe what was in each of those bills, and so does this one. I think they're very ideal.

The member from Thunder Bay-Superior North: I listened very carefully, but I haven't the slightest idea what his point was. I still can't figure out what he was selling. I know it was something about the bill—he seemed to stay on topic—but I have no idea where he was going or what his point was. It's most unfortunate. I feel sorry that I can't really respond, because there was no content to respond to.

The member for Hamilton West, in his response—I thought it was rather interesting—

Mr Christopherson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Recognizing the absolute importance of following procedures, I'm sure you would want to remind the member that the two-minute responses are for the initial speech that was made, not to other two-minute responses that come as a result.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: I was responding to the response to the speakers, when he said there was no improvement. I would suggest to you that having a job is a tremendous improvement.

Mr Christopherson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

Mr Galt: He's using up the time, Mr Speaker. Could you freeze the clock?

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair recognizes the member for Hamilton West on a point of order.

Mr Christopherson: I seek your assistance, Speaker, because after I made my point of order, which I do believe is in order—it's in the rules—the member then went on to say, "No, I'm just addressing the comments you made," which is exactly the point I said is against the standing orders and therefore unacceptable. If you would direct the speaker to follow the rules, it would be appreciated.

The Deputy Speaker: I want to remind the member for Northumberland that the response is to the comments of the debate. I will give you a couple of seconds if you would like to respond, with that.

Mr Galt: I thought it was also interesting to pick up during the debate a comment made about no suggestions coming from the opposition. I think that's a very good point. If they just had something worthwhile to suggest that would be constructive to this particular bill, maybe some changes could be made, but the only thing they had to say was they were opposed to what's in it, rather than having something worthwhile. I look forward—

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Prince Edward-Hastings has two minutes to respond.

Mr Parsons: It's obvious that we need a better PA system in this building, because it is not getting across the aisle.

Why did negotiations and all this happen? I hear the question asked, why were the labour unions in favour of reviewing it? I don't think the labour unions requested that this be opened up. I think they requested the opportunity to negotiate when they got some wind of what would happen if they didn't negotiate. I am reasonably certain, indeed positive, that the climate was created where they felt they had no choice but to proceed.

History has shown over the years of the industrialized world that the safety improvements that have come forward have come forward as a result of unions. They have stood up and fought for their members. As we reduce the ability of the unions to financially sustain their effort for safety improvements, we weaken safety for everyone. Groups that are not in unions have benefited from the safety initiatives that have been undertaken by the unionized members.

I don't believe it is this agreement that made things better in this province for the construction industry. As opposed to the manufacturing of cars or electronics, which can be done offshore, roads and buildings and bridges can be built only in Ontario. So certainly there had to be a reason for them to be built here. The growth happened because the US has a greatly strengthening economy. When we look at the economy being driven by exports to the US, yes, it created a need for buildings, it created a need for development. We are seeing a redistribution of wealth. Not every employee in the construction industry is able to buy land from the ORC and retire comfortably. They require an ongoing income. What this does is erode it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

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Interjections.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Somewhere along the line I think we've got our rotation slightly—

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Peterborough.

Mr Stewart: I thought maybe you were going to tell me to stand back down again. Anyway, thank you very much, Mr Speaker. It is indeed my privilege to speak to Bill 69. This act is, I believe, the start of a new, exciting,

co-operative working arrangement between the government and union workers.

I want to compliment the minister, the Honourable Chris Stockwell, and the 28 union representatives who represent the various unions and the various trades that make up the construction sectors. The bottom line of this legislation is a level playing field both for the union worker and for the employers. It was interesting that just last week I talked to a rather major builder in Toronto who was extremely complimentary of this legislation and suggested that if I would like to go out to the site, he would like to introduce me to a number of the workers there who were also extremely supportive of it.

I believe this legislation will modernize labour relations. They certainly have improved labour relations. It will also produce a healthy and stable construction industry. The construction industry, as we all know, is an industry that has a tremendous ripple effect on the economy of this province. I think one of the members across the way made the comment that it was nice to see cranes in the air. Yes, it is, and those cranes have been in the air since 1995. For the 10 years prior to that, the only cranes that were in the air had wings and feet. So it's great to see it happening, and I believe it's happening because of the futuristic look that this government has taken.

The construction industry, as we all know, stimulates the economy. It creates the jobs and it gets people off their dependency on social services. It creates revenues. It allows us to have the necessary services that are so very important to our social fabric, things like health care, education, social assistance. When you look at the 725,000 jobs that have been created in this province over the last five years, many of them have been created in the construction industry over the last four or five years, and that industry has helped to move this province forward. The economy of this province has moved forward because of the construction industry.

One of our promises when we first got elected back in 1995 was to eliminate Bill 40, the most undemocratic piece of legislation ever put in by any government, I believe, in the history of this province in regard to labour. Of course, that also goes along with the social contract. It wasn't too impressive either, to say the least.

Bill 40 did a number of things. It stopped construction totally. Jobs were eliminated. Revenues dropped. Social assistance went up. And you know what? Ontario came to a standstill. I remember when we were trying to put Bill 7 through, and indeed we got it through, trying to put democracy back into the workplace. There were great threats by the union bosses and those across this Legislature that it was going to shut down Ontario: "We'll show them."

You know, the funny part of it was that it was the union bosses who said that. It wasn't the fellow who wanted to go out and have a job, work hard and stimulate the economy, make a better life for his family. They weren't the ones who said that. The workers were the ones who wanted to get on with helping us as a govern-

ment to move this province forward. Bill 7 put democracy back into the workplace. I believe that is what this bill has done. I believe it is the middle-of-the-road type of legislation that both sides can live with.

I want to comment on the 18-month revisiting of it. I am 100% supportive of that, albeit the minister maybe has concerns and certainly those across the way seem to have some concerns. I believe in it 100%, because the unfortunate part of when legislation is passed in this House is that it goes on forever and ever and is never revisited. I suggest to you that one piece of legislation that was passed about 125 years ago and really has not been revisited since is the Municipal Act. I'm a great believer in sunset clauses. It's like anything you do in business these days: You put in a plan and then revisit it on a continual basis to make sure it is working right and does not have any adverse effects on the people involved with the legislation.

I want to make it very clear that I support revisiting this legislation, because it gives the employer the opportunity to look at how well it is or is not doing, as well as to show the worker, the person who is very much a part, and probably the main part, of the construction industry, what type of effect it has on them. So I'm very supportive of that type of legislation.

As I mentioned at the start, I believe Bill 69 is about fairness and flexibility. When you get 28 organizations or trades all agreeing on something, it bodes well for both sides. I mentioned before that it does create that level playing field, and all parties are then committed to working together. If there's one thing in this country, in this world or whatever, that makes things move forward and move along well, it's when all people are working together to make it work. I believe that is exactly what this legislation does.

The other thing that makes me very pleased about this legislation is where the employer is allowed to bring 40% of the workforce from outside the local union jurisdiction. It means that if I was an employer going into a new area where I was not necessarily familiar with the workforce, I could bring workers from my area whom I had confidence in, who I knew had a good work ethic and, more importantly, who knew how to do the job. That's an excellent section in this legislation and will possibly make it easier for employers, and employees as well, to negotiate and be very competitive in obtaining the various jobs.

As I mentioned, it used to be that folks were told whom they were going to get to work for them. I have been an employer. I've employed people for many years, and I believe I should have a say about whom I employ. I believe this new piece of legislation, with the 40% from areas I may represent, allows me as an employer, or certainly the employee—because it's a two-way street. They know how I operate and I know how they operate. I believe that can enhance the job and the job will be done that much better.

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So I think this is a tremendous piece of legislation. I think it is fair to all, and I compliment everybody who was part of it on both sides. People I have talked to in the residential area are extremely pleased about what it is doing.

One of the most important things about this piece of legislation is that it is a solution that is industry-developed. Those who are involved—and for the life of me, I can't understand why politicians and government believe they have all the answers. In this piece of legislation, the employers and employees from the industries are the ones who have come up with a solution, and I believe they should be complimented on doing that.

It appears to me that the only ones who are against it at the moment are the opposition. It's amazing how they know how this was all done. All they're doing is the usual rhetoric.

I compliment the people who negotiated this piece of legislation, this agreement. When it's good, certainly in the residential, for three years, I believe it will stabilize this industry, and Ontario will continue to grow, especially with our new budget. With legislation like this that we're putting through, I believe the future of Ontario in the construction field is great and the future of Ontario as we stimulate the economy will be enhanced.

I thank you for allowing me to speak on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): The member for Peterborough talks about putting democracy back into the workplace. I remember the rhetoric during the election campaign. Those were exactly the comments being made locally by the Conservative member at the time.

There is an assumption that labour leaders are somehow elected non-democratically. It is a democratic process. Union members are capable of making up their own minds and electing their leaders. Unions have played a role for years in making working conditions better for workers and providing a collective voice to persuade employers to invest in health and safety.

In Sarnia-Lambton, we have some horrendous conditions of health that arise from occupational diseases. I would like to say that it wasn't the employer who brought that out to be rectified; it was the union that advocated on behalf of the workers.

I don't understand how, when we talk about competitiveness, it always has to be on the backs of the workers. When supply or any other element of the cost of a construction job goes up, that's just a fact of life and we have to deal with the extra cost. But for some reason, wages and the collective ability to negotiate with a strong voice have to be undermined, because we don't want the workers to have as strong a voice as the Goliath employer.

Mr Christopherson: The member for Peterborough talked about Bill 40 as if it was something evil, which obviously he believes, but then held up Bill 7 as an example of enlightened legislation and bandied around

words like "democracy" in the context of references to Bill 7. He seems to have completely forgotten that Bill 7 was introduced on October 4, 1995, and was law by October 31—not one minute of public hearings, not one minute of parliamentary hearings, not one minute's hearing from anyone. The government contended at the time that it was merely repealing the NDP Bill 40. First of all, Bill 40 accomplished something that the working people of this province were proud of, and that is that we finally banned scabs from the face of this province. As much as the Tories hate that concept, that's fair labour practice. But at least in the Common Sense Revolution it talked about the fact that they were going to repeal Bill 40. So as much as I was deathly opposed to what you were doing, you did run on it and have a mandate.

What you did not have a mandate to do, I say to the member from Peterborough, was to bring in a brand new Ontario Labour Relations Act from front to back. It wasn't just repealing Bill 40, as awful as that was. You began the elimination of the employee wage protection plan. You denied workers in the public sector the right to continue with their union if their business is privatized, the same as the private sector has. There was automatic certification that was put in place by a Tory government four and a half decades ago. That was the most undemocratic piece of labour legislation we've ever seen.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It's a pleasure to take this two-minute small debate on this Bill 69. The member from Peterborough took part in this debate very eloquently, and some other members, the members from Sarnia-Lambton and Hamilton West. They did not come to the point but at least they spent their two minutes. Let me reiterate some of the highlights in this bill. Members seem to have forgotten that, and hopefully the public watching this debate will realize and follow some of the next debates.

First of all, the bill addresses residential market labour negotiations. What happened in 1998? There was a series of disruptions whereby one trade union after another had strikes. One would settle and then the other one would go on strike. Do you know who suffered? It was the public that suffered, the new homebuyers, and the whole economy suffered because of that. People were very upset and suddenly it didn't help anyone.

What this bill does is say that all union contracts will end in April 2001 and they will be renegotiated up to April 2004. I think that brings some sanity to the negotiation process. It doesn't take away the right of workers to negotiate; it brings back some harmonizing of the dates when the contracts end and it brings it into perspective so that the public can heave a sigh of relief.

Another thing it does is labour mobility. I think some of the members touched on that. It's very important, as in any other field, that people have the right to choose who their workers are. This bill gives employers the right to choose, to some extent, who are the people working on their contracts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Questions or comments?

Mr Bartolucci: The member for Peterborough spoke about democracy in the workplace. I would suggest to him that the history of this government over the course of the last five years would define anything but democracy in the workplace. We look at Bill 7, we look at Bill 31, and certainly this government is using the Ontario Labour Relations Act as a political football. That's wrong, because the Ontario Labour Relations Act provides the balance that we believe is necessary to ensure that there is fairness in the industry as well as competitiveness. So I would suggest to the member for Peterborough that maybe we are so skeptical on this side of the House because of the history of this government in the past. We don't want you to repeat those mistakes with Bill 69.

I would suggest to you as well that the competitive aspects and the definition of competitiveness is very important here. The minister spoke to that in his opening remarks and certainly members across the way have spoken to that. I would suggest to you that the way you define competitiveness will define this legislation and will either make it successful legislation, if it's passed, or a failure, as we feel this legislation may be without very significant amendments. I would suggest to you that it's important that if you define competitiveness against non-union wages, the lowest salary possible, then you are sacrificing the balance that's been in this industry for 30-odd years, since the Davis amendment.

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I would suggest to you that you tread very carefully as you define what this legislation will be like when it finally becomes law, because competitiveness in the workplace, if defined as non-union wages, minimum wage, is not in the best interests of democracy in the workplace.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Peterborough has two minutes to reply.

Mr Stewart: It's interesting to listen to people talk about competitiveness. I've had the privilege, or not the privilege, of generating my own paycheque for about 40 years, so I happen to know a little bit about competitiveness. I also know that competitiveness means the key to success. It produces a good product and it generates jobs. It also produces a very economical product.

I compliment the employers, the ministry and the union representatives for this bill, because what we did was listen to both sides. We listened to the people who know what they can live with. Again, I listen to some of the politicians these days and it appears that they seem to know everything about everything, and I hate to tell you that's not true. Why would we not take the advice of people like the 28 representatives of the various construction trades and say to them: "What can you live with? How do you see us improving construction, improving business in this province, improving the economy, improving jobs and, above all, improving the product?" That's exactly what it is. I often think there are other sectors in this province where if we added a little com-

petition to it, just possibly we may end up with a better product.

I am very pleased, as I said, about this legislation. I am also very pleased, as I mentioned earlier, that we are going to revisit it in 18 months to make sure that everything is working well. I'm a great believer in: What is not working, change; what is, leave in place.

The Acting Speaker: I would just like to draw the members' attention to the fact that time appears to have stopped in here; at least the clock has. As we would at a hockey game, the table is keeping the time. So if you're wondering how much time there is, the clerks would be pleased to let you know what the official time is.

Further debate?

Mr Levac: Mr Speaker, with your indulgence I'll be splitting my time with the member for Ottawa-Vanier.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk about Bill 69, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 in relation to the construction industry. I would also like to indicate to the Minister of Labour that I listened very carefully not only to his introduction of this bill, but also to his very passionate explanation in defence of the bill.

One of the things I want to point out very clearly now, because some of the things were talked about in the discussion and in the debate, is that a great deal of concern was expressed, before the bill was produced, to the minister and to the previous Minister of Labour about section 1(4). The minister himself told us in the House that there was a very lively debate in his own caucus about this legislation. From that I would take, and would submit to the House today, that one group did want to remove 1(4) from the legislation. The compromise that the minister talked about was not so much whether or not they got all of the players onside, but it was more of a negotiating tool to go to the union membership and say: "Look, I've got some members on my side of the caucus who would just love to get rid of 1(4). I have a hard time getting them convinced to give a little bit of leeway here. If we don't watch out, we're going to have to lose 1(4) and that opportunity is going to be lost to you. If you guys play ball with us, we can probably guarantee you that 1(4) won't be removed." So much for the conspiracy that the minister said I was trying to portray, other than to the fact that with his own words he did tell us that there was a very lively debate in caucus. I would suggest that we were not talking about a gun to someone's head, but just simply made the comment and observation that the minister had to sell this. If the caucus had to talk about 1(4) in that manner, we would end up with basically, I would say, the idea that it could have been used as leverage or a tool to say to the industry, "You'd better go in this direction, because if you don't, I'm having a hard time convincing my caucus that they are not going to get rid of 1(4)."

One of the things I also want to talk about is the idea of wages. Bill 69 allows construction companies using unionized labour to pay lower wages for their workers in order to better compete with non-unionized competitors. I'm going to suggest that that has been accepted as what

might possibly happen in the industry, that we're going to have to start seeing lower wages across the board for unionized members.

It's unbelievable that credit is not being given to the unionized members for improving the health and safety standards of the industry across the board, for non-union members as well. As the member from Thunder Bay pointed out very clearly, much to the chagrin of some of the people on the other side who weren't listening carefully to what he was trying to talk about, there have been improvements in health and safety as a result of the union movement.

Further to that, I would suggest, let's not have a race to the bottom; let's have a race to the top in terms of the ability of the employer and the employees to benefit equally from the boom that's happening in our province today. The idea is not to divide the spoils up to see, "What can I take out of it?" and then I'll give you the crumbs; it's, "Let's share among ourselves to try to get what's best for all of us": better-built homes, better construction all around, better health and safety.

The mobility question then comes in, and here's what we want to do about mobility—well, here's what happens. We bring up to 40% of our workers for the project from outside the geographic area where the contract is located. That's 40% of the labour for that particular project that can be brought in from outside. That means that 40% of the labour inside our municipality can't get that job. But it goes further. Of the remaining 60% of the workers, who will still be local, the employer will be able to select up to 60% of those. That means the net effect is that the contractor will be able to choose 76% of all workers, with the union selecting the remaining 24%. I dare say that the 24% will definitely be coming from the local industry. There's no question in my mind that what we have is an unbalanced attempt to make sure that people who have the contracts get to dictate what type of labour is going to be brought in to the job site. I respectfully suggest to you that it is a health and safety issue, because we have the stats; we have the understanding that in a lot of the non-unionized work, health and safety gets jeopardized.

We're also talking about the selection process. As the member for Sudbury said, they basically made it very clear that: "I will start picking people who understand how I operate. If I happen to operate on the edge of health and safety, I expect my workers to do the same." If you dare say anything about it or you bring it to the attention of a union or the Ministry of Labour, you probably will never work in that area again, or at least you won't get a call from that contractor.

I want to come back to health and safety for a very simple reason. Unfortunately, and very solemnly, earlier this month I had to attend—I felt in my heart that I had to attend—the ceremonies for the fallen workers. I have to tell you that I heard some stories there that were shameful, that in this day and age, the 21st century, we still have an abysmal record on the safety and health of our employees across the province on work sites.

I say that this bill must be considered to be a detriment to that act. This is unbelievable: We may have to institute legislation to make sure that people are healthy and safe on the job site. It's sad to think that's going to happen. I will say on an optimistic note, though, I was able to tour a plant that had over two years of no accidents on-site, working on their third year. Why? Because the employer, who witnessed many, many accidents as a worker himself, decided to dedicate his life, when he created this business, to never having that happen on his work site again. Due to his commitment, and I compliment him for it, he improved that record, which is absolutely laudable in our municipality today. To them and to the workers, to whom he has said, "Health and safety is the prime factor here when we do our job"—it doesn't bring productivity down; it increases it and cuts down on the use of the health care system. So I say to the minister: Be careful that this legislation does not affect our health and safety.

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I also suggest, very respectfully, that there are options that need to be considered. We heard earlier from two members on this side that amendments will be offered on the mobility issue. I also suggest that the members on the other side were being rather proud of section 163.6. I want to read it into the record, because it doesn't say what the members are saying. It says something a little different, from what I read.

Section 163.6 says, "The minister shall by no later than December 31, 2001, conduct a review of the effectiveness of provisions of this act enacted by the Labour Relations Amendment Act (Construction Industry), 2000 in improving the competitiveness of the industrial, commercial and institutional sector of Ontario's construction industry."

The first section implies what the members on the other side were saying is very good, that you want to review it after a certain period of time. But we have to pay attention to the second section, "in improving the competitiveness of the industrial, commercial and institutional sector of Ontario's construction industry." That section brings me worry, because it says, "We're simply going to prolong." The first section says to me, "We review." The second section says: "You ain't seen nothing yet. If we think that 1(4) is protected after this legislation, if it doesn't seem to be working in the way of this particular Minister of Labour, then we have another hammer to hit you with. We're going to review this and, guess what, you're going to have another lively debate on that side of the House inside your caucus to say, 'See, I told you, we have to get rid of 1(4).' So now we get to drop the hammer because you've built in the option and built in the hammer for the next time around."

I suggest, very respectfully, that we take a good, hard look at the amendments that are going to be offered by the members on this side, and I say to the minister, if you are truly concerned about the workers and the competitiveness of the industry, we'd better have a good sober second look at mobility, the naming and in particu-

lar the health and safety issues that are being brought up by the members on this side.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity.

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): Je suis bien contente d'avoir l'occasion de pouvoir vous faire part de mes commentaires sur le projet de loi 69, which is a bill that allows construction companies using unionized labour to pay lower wages to their workers in order to better compete against non-unionized competitors.

This bill is not at all about achieving balance. It's about threatening workers with losing their most basic bargaining rights unless they agree to measures that would reduce their wages. I feel that this bill attempts to take away the unions' democratic rights to organize, to protect and to bargain.

I think this government has introduced Bill 69 as a compromise. You all know and are aware that many construction unions are really split on this legislation. While a minority have spoken out against the bill, I feel that the majority are remaining quiet, concerned that any opposition they could bring would lead this government to eliminate section 1(4) of the Ontario Labour Relations Act, which everyone knows obligates any subsidiary of an existing contractor to use unionized labour and therefore permits double-breasting, which leaves the contractors free to establish non-union subsidiaries.

C'est une compétition que je trouve très injuste. C'est un projet de loi qui enlève des droits acquis aux travailleurs de la construction syndiqués. Je réalise que ce projet de loi apporte une autre embûche à l'industrie de la construction.

I feel that Bill 69, the way it is, is going to throw another jolt into the construction industry. Construction workers are going to feel threatened about losing their bargaining rights, for which they have fought for so many years and which they have won inch by inch. I believe that labour laws should be like collective agreements. Both sides should leave the table feeling that they have won a balanced settlement. This sense of balance produces a competitive workplace and good labour-management relations.

While Bill 69 does not necessarily eliminate subsection 1(4), it makes it somewhat more difficult for unions to prove that new contracting companies are related to existing contractors and are therefore required to use only unionized labour, since this bill says that employers will now be able to bring up to 40% of the workers for a project from outside the geographic area where the contract is located. Previously, few non-local workers were permitted to be brought into work sites, and the unions almost always selected all workers who would work on the contract.

Ce changement pourrait faire en sorte que des travailleurs de la construction de grands centres urbains comme Ottawa ou Toronto pourraient être embauchés, au détriment des travailleurs locaux et ruraux. Yes, this bill could result in workers from large urban centres being brought in to take the jobs of rural and local construction

workers. This happened about two years ago in Ottawa, when they decided to make renovations to the Rideau Carleton Raceway, where the electrical contract was given to a big Quebec company that was supposedly incorporated in Ontario. They did not necessarily hire qualified electricians. They hired labourers instead of qualified electricians, as a result of which the job took longer to do, because of having to redo the work that was not done right because these labourers didn't necessarily know how to go about it, and left local qualified workers home without a job. I guess you could always say that this jeopardized a bit the security of the public that would go on these premises. Imagine if I one day asked 40% of my workers in Ottawa-Vanier to work in your office. How do you think your workers would feel? Well, that's about the same thing as when we're talking about these workers. Here we go again with another bill for the construction industry, an industry that is already in turmoil, un autre projet de loi qui mène l'industrie de la construction en doute.

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If you remember prior to the 1999 election, this government brought forward Bill 17, which was the interprovincial agreement for construction workers from Quebec and Ontario. This was supposedly to protect Ontario construction workers. In November 1999, not very long after, the government finally realized that because they had not implemented Bill 17 as it should be, they then had to sign another agreement with Quebec. So far, this has not settled the matter.

Le projet de loi 17, qui avait été voté et décidé avant l'élection de juin dernier, qui était supposé donner la meilleure des protections aux gens de la construction de l'Ontario, ce gouvernement a réalisé qu'il n'avait pas de dents, qu'il ne donnait rien. Alors en novembre dernier ils ont été obligés de négocier encore avec la province de Québec pour une autre entente, et croyez-moi, je le vis à Ottawa parce que je suis sur la frontière du Québec. Glengarry-Prescott-Russell le vit aussi parce qu'eux aussi sont sur la frontière du Québec. Croyez-moi, ce projet de loi 17 n'est vraiment pas ce qu'il faut. Là, il y a encore beaucoup de travail à faire. Alors tout ça pour dire, yet another bill for a construction industry that is already in turmoil.

Voici les remarques que je voulais faire. Je vous remercie de votre attention.

Mr Christopherson: Just a few comments on the remarks from the member from Ottawa-Vanier. She talks about yet another construction bill that's going to create turmoil, and I think that's virtually guaranteed. There are clauses in this bill that if passed unamended—and I say this very straightforwardly—with or without the support of the labour leaders, are going to make it very difficult for them to manage in terms of how people are going to react when the issue of the sub-agreements takes place. There are members who haven't been following this—and that is really the fault of the government again, because of their breakneck speed in passing legislation—and a lot of construction workers have no idea what's going on. Given the amount of information that citizens

Given the amount of information that citizens are bombarded with on a day-to-day basis, we know that it takes time for issues to get through to people, because they have so many concerns, so many sources of information, a constant bombardment. There are going to be an awful lot of construction workers who, even after this is passed, are not going to know what it means.

But when they find out through one of the clauses in here that their wages, which they thought were covered by their collective agreement, are going to be less tomorrow than they are today for the same work, there's going to be a lot of turmoil. When construction workers find out that up to 76% of the workers who are going to be working on a construction site can be name-hired, meaning hand-picked, there's going to be a lot of fear out there among older workers and others who may not be seen as the most desirable by employers who have a choice.

I agree with the member. I think she makes a very good point. There's going to be a lot of turmoil, not only as we go through the process but more importantly when this becomes law.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to make a few comments on Bill 69. I congratulate the Minister of Labour for his foresight in bringing this legislation forward. I would also like to commend the 28 construction unions that participated in the process.

I believe just the opposite of the members opposite; I believe that the legislation adds competition and fairness to our construction industry. I spent 25 years in the construction business as a non-union company. I had an opportunity on a lot of occasions to work with jobs and actually did jobs for unionized companies out of the city that didn't want to go into the northern part of Ontario. Our shop didn't go union at the time, but we were able to compete for those jobs and work co-operatively with the other trade unions on the jobs.

The economy we have today dictates a lot of the concerns about what the industry will require in the future; for example, the shortage of labour. Today we have a booming economy and there is a distinct shortage of almost all of the construction trades. If you look at any of our high schools or if you look at any of our community colleges, they'll all tell you that they're screaming for construction trades. As time goes on, the fact that we can bring competition to the industry will add the opportunity for more people to enter the construction trades.

Mr Gerretsen: Let me first of all say that I think the record of this government is quite clear when it comes to labour relations matters. Over the last five years, every bill that you have passed has been an attack on the labour movement.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): Oh, come on.

Mr Gerretsen: Every bill, right from Bill 7 that was passed four years ago, has been an attack on the labour unions, because basically you believe that everything

should be done to help business, and one way in which you think you can accomplish this is by attacking unions.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Who creates the jobs, John?

Mr Gerretsen: What the unions would have preferred is that you wouldn't have done anything at all.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade is not in his seat.

Mr Gerretsen: Speaker, thank you very much for trying to quiet the minister down, because he's not in his seat either.

But it's a fact. At least speak of your own convictions. Say, "Yes, we believe that business should be paramount and that unions should be subservient, and we do not believe in an equally negotiated relationship." That's what it's all about. What you people have been good at is in doing one thing and saying you're doing something totally different. What you're saying here is that you're making it better for unions, when the union movement well knows that what you're actually doing is taking away their rights, the rank-and-file rights that have been negotiated in this province over the last 70 or 80 years.

This ability to somehow do one thing against a particular group and then say you're doing that group a favour just doesn't hack it out there. At least have the firmness of your own convictions and admit what you're doing here.

Mr Galt: It was rather entertaining to listen to the two opposition members speaking here this evening. It was totally irrelevant. The topic they were on to really had very little relationship to the bill. They had nothing to offer.

If they'd just had something constructive to give to the government, to the Minister of Labour, there may have been something that the minister might have used, something the minister might have looked at. When there is nothing constructive in their comments, it's very difficult for the minister to be able to respond and go ahead. It seems continuously the members of the opposition get up and speak, and we listen to this kind of thing. It's unfortunate, because they have the opportunity, and certainly this government is responsive to looking after the concerns that would be brought forward by members of the opposition.

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I notice the member from Prince Edward-Hastings looking a little uncomfortable over there. Earlier he was talking about things being cute in the definition or the heading of the bill. But what I think is cute was the headlines in the *Intelligencer* about this time last year, about the chairman of the school board having his campaign signs made in the local high school. To me, that's being cute, when you are out there campaigning for the Liberal Party for the upcoming election in the riding of Prince Edward-Hastings and actually having campaign signs made in the local high school. To me, that's cute and that's taking advantage of the students and of the

system. I think that's truly unfortunate. No wonder he's looking uncomfortable.

Interjections.

Mr Parsons: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I did not direct nor have my signs made in the high school. I believe the member—

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order. I believe there are 15 seconds left.

Mr Galt: That was the headline in the paper. Whether he did or not, I really don't know. That's just what I happened to see in the headlines. He believes in the paper, and so would I. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: You would have to give me notice of a point of privilege. A point of order perhaps?

Mr Gerretsen: It's a point of privilege arising out of this debate right now. According to the rules—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: You must give notice of a point of privilege.

Mr Gerretsen: Not if it arises from the proceedings.

The Acting Speaker: It could be a point of order.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, then, Mr Speaker: Surely it is unparliamentary for a member to attack another member on his personal qualities or personal matters that may or may not have happened in the member's situation without knowing the facts, as he openly admitted here this evening.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: It is, of course, out of order to impugn motive. But I did not hear that.

Response, the member for Brant.

Mr Levac: I find it rather interesting, and would only hope and assume that the vacant seat I saw across the way wasn't that of the member who was making comments about our ability to speak to the issue. I don't recall whether the member was watching from a TV screen outside or was in his seat at the time. But whatever the case may be, I want to point out for the member and for the entire House that there were some issues I brought to the attention of the House.

I think the member is trying to cloud the issue and trying to make it irrelevant to talk about the health and safety of workers in Ontario. I think it's a shame. He should be ashamed of himself for thinking that the health and safety of Ontario workers should be washed over and saying it's irrelevant to talk about that in this bill. Health and safety are very relevant in this bill and in every single bill we pass in the labour movement. I think the member should be ashamed of himself for thinking that. It's absolutely unacceptable. These people put their lives on the line in their jobs.

I also want to make the point that we talked about mobility, we talked about naming and we talked about the review. If the member thinks that is not relevant to Bill 69, he's not paying attention and he's the one who is irrelevant. I assume that members on that side attended the ceremonies for the fallen and dead workers on

construction sites of the labour movement in this province. It's absolutely unacceptable to say that it's irrelevant to talk about health and safety concerning this bill and any other labour bill that this government or any other government passes. It's shameful to think that that member would take two seconds out of his precious time in this House to bad-mouth the people of Ontario—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Gerretsen: Mr Speaker, on a point of privilege: I cite to you section 21(c), which states, "Any member proposing to raise a point of privilege, other than one arising out of proceedings in the chamber during the course of a sessional day, shall give to the Speaker a written statement of the point at least one hour prior"

The matter I was raising with you arose out of actions that were taken in the House immediately prior to the point of privilege being raised by me. I feel that on that point it is totally unfair for a member to make personal accusations against another member when that member is not aware of the entire facts of the situation, as that member openly admitted in this particular case, as it relates to the signs that were made by the member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? I would remind the House that this is the conclusion of a lead speech. I believe there are 28 minutes on the clock.

Mr Christopherson: I want to again thank the House for the opportunity—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Could we just remember where we are this evening? The member for Hamilton West has the floor.

Mr Christopherson: I was opening my comments by thanking members of the House for agreeing to the unanimous consent they provided the last time I spoke to allow me an opportunity to conclude my leadoff at a later time. It is on a personal level very much appreciated, and I thank you for that respect and that consideration. Now I'm going to rip your bill.

I have already spoken a while during my previous comments about the mobility and I won't, obviously, repeat that part of my comments. I just want to touch on it again very briefly because I think it is so significant. Since my original comments, I've now had a number of phone calls from construction workers across the province, not the leadership people who have met with the minister but people in communities who work in the construction industry and who are really concerned. This is one of the issues that worries them the most.

I would remind the House again that under this law the contractors will now be allowed to bring 40% of the workers to a construction site at their choosing. That's called name-hiring. I remember one of the members of the government, a backbencher, standing in his place and saying, "This makes a whole lot of sense because it allows the employer to choose the individuals they think are the best, the ones with the greatest skills, and therefore this is good for business," etc. That was their argument.

What it completely ignored was the fact that given a choice, I'm convinced there are an awful lot of employers who in their own heart and mind will choose a 25-year-old bricklayer over a 55-year-old, based on the thinking that they're going to get more work out of someone who is that much younger. I can tell you there are older workers who have the capability, the skills to perform any function—or they couldn't be on a work site—who are worried. They're worried about the fact that they're going to be overlooked.

I raised the fact that that's just the first 40%. The employer still has the right to name-hire 60% of the remaining workers to be hired. That means that local communities are only going to get about 24%. That's 76% of the work site name-hires. So there's a real concern about what happens to older workers. Where is their protection? What happens to people who are health and safety reps? That was raised by my Liberal colleague. I've raised it before and agree with the point. If someone was a known activist in the health and safety part of their union, that is not likely to be an employer's first choice.

It's the same with someone who served as a steward, someone who was maybe a very successful steward in that they challenged the employer and were successful on a number of grievances. They would be seen at the very least as competent, possibly as a hero among their co-workers for fighting for the union members' rights and winning them. But from the employer's perspective, they're going to take a look at this person on a list and they're going to say, "I sure don't want him around." Where is their protection?

I realize it affects some trades more than others, fair enough but, nonetheless, where there are still hiring halls, where you have a large percentage of people who are hired through the union hall, this is a right that's being taken away from them. I know there are a lot of workers worried about how much work they're going to get to pay their bills if they fit into these categories. I think that remains one of the biggest problems with this bill, and it's going to create a lot of difficulty for individuals who didn't have any problems in this regard before this bill. Again, for this government to contend that this is good for workers flies in the face of what this bill says.

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I want to move on. There are a couple of issues I want to cover in the 24 remaining minutes of my comments. One is an issue that is covered in the third paragraph of the explanatory note of the bill. It reads as follows: "The proposed section 160.1 of the act permits the abandonment of bargaining rights by agreement between an employer and its affiliated bargaining agents. The section permits such an agreement to apply with respect to all of Ontario or specified parts of it."

It's my understanding—and I see the minister just over yonder, and if I have a misunderstanding or I'm wrong in my interpretation I would very much like to be corrected, because I don't profess to understand fully what this means and what the implications are. I have

only been given a legal briefing. I haven't seen a written brief with all the precedents and the history cited. What worries me is that this is saying that it's going to be OK where a union and an employer agree to abandon the collective bargaining rights that the bargaining agent has on behalf of those workers. If that's the case, I ask myself, why is this here? It hasn't received a lot of attention yet by any of us. It hasn't been raised as an alarm by a lot of folks, but I find it troubling. This is not a government that believes in superfluous language. If they put something in there, there's a reason, and if it's a labour bill the reason has to be, in my opinion, something that takes away the rights of workers somewhere. This speaks to abandoning those rights voluntarily.

I realize that the issue of competitiveness is one that's driving all of this. I'm told that this is meant to make some areas more competitive, because if the company is no longer union, then the collective agreement doesn't apply and they can have lower labour costs and therefore the bid would be lower, and as I understand it, this is particularly in the area of the subcontract field. What I worry about with that is that if you take that thought to its logical conclusion or to its extension, what it says is, if the government is going to argue that this clause is in the best interests of the union members outside board area 8, outside Toronto, which is where I understand this is to apply—I understand it's not going to be applying to the Toronto area, but everywhere outside it will—what it's saying is that it's good for construction workers to see the union gone. Some may believe that—that's their right; it's a free country—but I don't believe that's the majority by any stretch. I think most people would agree that having a collective agreement in most cases means that you make more money, have better benefits and more rights than most people in places where there aren't unions. There are exceptions, of course, but as a rule of thumb I think that's a fair observation to make, which would mean that at the end of the day the government's great strategy for helping construction workers would be to see the elimination of all the unions and then they'd be nice and competitive. They wouldn't be making much money, but they would be working all the time, which is exactly what you would like. You want lots of people working, you just don't want them making too much money, because then it goes in the wrong category; it goes to individuals rather than to your corporate friends.

I find this very troubling. I find it troubling to think that there are circumstances where a union would voluntarily give up their bargaining rights on an issue of competitiveness. It's bad enough that we have what they call the market recovery—got to love the phrases you guys use. It's bad enough there; we're going to have sub-agreements where the provincial agreement wage levels and benefit levels will not be the same. They'll be lower. But now we're actually talking, in the interests of competitiveness, of abandoning a bargaining unit so they don't have all the benefits that a union contract brings so they're more competitive in bidding.

Just to stand back for a second, there's a real philosophical difference. The minister and a couple of members of the government have been asking this evening: "Well, what's your positive suggestion? What do you have to suggest that's better?" First of all, I think it was absolutely unacceptable that you would point the gun to the labour movement, the construction workers and say, "Get an agreement that everybody can live with or we remove 1(4)."

Secondly, this whole notion that you remain competitive by backing up, backing up, backing up, at the end of the day becomes very problematic, particularly when we realize that there really is no bottom as to where this government would like to see wages fall. If they could have electricians making minimum wage—which they haven't increased in five and a half years—if they could see the wages of an electrician fall to minimum wage, they'd be thrilled. That suits them just fine, because much of their agenda is about suppressing and lowering the value of labour. It doesn't matter whether we're talking about the restaurant workers who used to work right here in this building, some of whom had been here 20 years and were privatized and turfed out—I think some were offered their jobs at outrageous reductions in their pay. You did the same thing to the cleaning staff who cleaned the offices here at the Queen's Park precinct.

So it's not just union members; it's not just high-earning individuals. It's all of labour. They want your wages lower, everybody's wages lower. I guess that's fine if you're in the top percentage of individuals who own and run everything, especially since your bonuses are going to be in the millions, and with the tax cut that Harris has given you, you're now getting tens of thousands of dollars extra. I can see why they want to go along with an agenda that says wages should be lower.

For the life of me, I still can't understand why so many nurses, teachers, police officers, firefighters and other people who work in the public sector support this government. I really don't, because at the end of the day, if they can play a firefighter against a police officer, against a nurse, against a construction worker to have lower wages in all those categories, they're going to do it. They don't philosophically believe in the idea that there's enough wealth to go around in this province, that we don't have to see so many rich people at the top and such a huge group of people at the bottom—and we have them; they're bigger and in deeper poverty than we've ever seen in the history of Ontario—and a shrinking middle-class.

This is not an agenda nor a philosophy that we in the NDP accept. So this whole approach is not one that we can fix with a couple of amendments or tinkering. We'll offer amendments to try to mitigate the damage, but any thought that this can be improved with one or two creative ideas is just not on for us, because it's going in the wrong direction. It's taking things away from people, which you've turned into an art form.

You've already got 76% name-hire. This clause allows an employer to go in front of an arbitrator and claim that the remaining 24% makes them uncompetitive. If they can make that pitch successfully to the arbitrator, the ratios change and you could have fewer local people being hired, and you would have the favourites of the employer moving around the province at the expense of people who perhaps were raised and worked and had a

family all their life in the same community. They can't get a job because they were a union steward once, or they can't get a job because they're now 55 years old. These are distinct possibilities under this legislation.

"4. Accommodation and travel allowances." The minister said "the cost of labour." Well, they decided that accommodation and travel allowances is a cost of labour, and anybody who talks to anybody in the home care field will know what has happened to their travel allowance as this whole issue of competitiveness creeps into it. Your entire travel and accommodation allowance could be removed because there's another firm that has enough employees that have friends and relatives that they don't need a hotel or a small efficiency apartment. They don't have that cost. Therefore, they make the pitch to the arbitrator, "I'm paying the province-wide agreement level for accommodation and meals and it's making me uncompetitive." Under this law, that's grounds to have that subagreement lowered. This one is very—

Hon Mr Palladini: Is he reaching, or what?

Mr Christopherson: I heard somebody over there say, "reaching." I'm not reaching. I'm reading the bill.

"5. Requirements respecting the ratio of apprentices to journeymen employed by an employer." That has nothing at all to do with the cost of labour. It has a lot to do with the quality of apprentices and journeypersons we graduate from the apprentice program. It has everything to do with that. You have already increased the number of apprentices there can be per journeyperson. This is not good for the skilled trades careers of many people. They are not going to have the same skill levels, the same skill sets, that earlier generations had, because they won't have as close a hands-on, one-on-one apprenticeship training with a journeyperson.

Let me just shore up an argument coming from my colleagues next to us here. There is a health and safety issue to the extent that one of the things that journeypersons teach apprentices is how to do the job safely, do it efficiently, do it effectively, do quality work. Our construction workers in Ontario are among the best in the world in terms of the quality of the work they provide. We're going to lose that if they lose the training programs that help them acquire those skills. Yet you've now allowed, or will allow under this bill, the right for an arbitrator to agree with an employer that this ratio of apprentices to journeypersons is making them uncompetitive and therefore the arbitrator can change those numbers. Let me also say as an aside that under this legislation there isn't even a guarantee that the union gets to make a face-to-face argument in front of the arbitrator. The arbitrator may decide to do that; the arbitrator may not. The arbitrator can only rule down, not up. I mean, talk about Russian roulette loaded up against the unions.

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What we have here is one example where you could have one area that has a subagreement that is lower than the provincial agreement, but that's not the end of the story. You can have all these subagreements all across the province, every employer group in the province

competing with other areas trying to make cases in front of arbitrators to lower them. At the end of the day, the value of construction workers and the money you make and the benefits that you have for your family go down.

With this kind of language, it's not just once. It was bad enough when there were singular hits taken in the auto industry. I was active as a labour leader at that time and I know how difficult it was. We held them off as best we could, but make no mistake, there were some concessions. But at least it was a one-off, if one has to find a silver lining, to the extent that at the end of that collective agreement you were back to square one, and hopefully the economy had turned around to the point where you could now make that back and then some. This is in legislation. I know you're going to hopefully pull the review, but notwithstanding that—because I don't believe for a second you would ever review this bill in favour of workers—it goes on in perpetuity, until the law itself is changed. So even after every set of negotiations, when construction workers and their families sit down and draw up the family budget, they have no idea what wage rates they're going to receive over the next year. They have no idea whether or not they are going to be selected for work if they are not part of the chosen 76%. That's an awful lot of economic uncertainty during boom times that you're imposing on these construction workers.

I only have a couple of minutes left, but I do want to say that it's interesting that the arbitrator, in doing these subagreements, takes wages down and benefits down, but where in here does it say the employer has to sit down and open up the books and show exactly what all their costs are? What about the profit line? If all those individual workers have to take a hit, isn't there an argument that if there's a big enough bottom line, where it says "Profit," then maybe some of that ought to be contributed too? Not a word of that in here: not opening the books; not the employer contributing above and beyond whatever they might put into the company; no ability for the union to say: "Wait a minute. That's not the way that project unfolded."

None of that happens. This is all about setting up a scheme that allows an arbitrator to decide not if a worker's wages go down, but simply by how much. And at the end of the day, you expect the people who work in the construction industry to not only believe this is in their best interests, but that their own labour leaders wanted it. What a joke.

I'm really disappointed in the Minister of Labour for pursuing this line. Had he had some defence of saying 1(4) is gone, that would still be better than standing in this place and having backbencher after backbencher read off the notes you are provided with—I'm not faulting you for that, but you're reading off them—and they say that unions asked for all of this, that "We didn't tell them 1(4) would be pulled," and that's not the reality.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, you did. You said that 1(4) is gone, and if not, I'd sure love to hear the Minister of

Labour roll in here, stand up, tell us that he's prepared to commit in writing that if the union leadership went offside on this bill, he wouldn't touch any part of 1(4). Remove that, remove the threat of 1(4), and then let's see how many labour leaders are lined up supporting this bill. They're onside with this for one reason and one reason only: In their estimation, it's the lesser of two evils.

Interjection: It's give and take.

Mr Christopherson: No, this is about take and take, I say to the parliamentary assistant. There is nothing in here for the workers who work in the construction industry. What you have done is you have threatened them with the worst-case scenario, a nuclear scenario, but now you're going to move in with conventional weapons and tell them they ought to be happy that there isn't some mushroom cloud over the province. The fact is that you forced the unions to the bargaining table and they were forced to accept this because it's marginally better than what you were going to do.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Galt: It's rather entertaining to listen to the member for Hamilton West. Obviously this evening he was demonstrating for the union leaders back home. I'm sure he was planning for a fundraiser next time around for himself and his party.

I was particularly intrigued by his comments about employers coming to the government and saying, "Save us from ourselves." With the power of strikes used against them relentlessly, as it was in 1998 for five months straight, strike after strike that paralyzed residential construction, yes, they need to be saved from something, and it wasn't from themselves; it was to be saved from the situation they found themselves in, a most unfortunate situation that was certainly contributed to by both of the opposition parties.

The member for Hamilton West criticizes the arbitrator. He seems to be missing the point that it's competitiveness that keeps jobs for these people. If one trade goes off on strike, there's a domino effect so that the other people do not end up working. They can't continue when that kind of thing is happening.

I think it's neat, in this particular legislation, what he was hinting at when he talked about the arbitrator. That related to the fact that the contracts will end on April 30, 2001. Then the power to strike—and lockouts; both ways—will have a period of time, from May 1 to June 15. It can't go on forever. This is so helpful to the whole construction industry. It's helping the unionized employees from striking against themselves. So the end result will be a more competitive industry and I think the member for Hamilton West should be very—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Parsons: The inference has been made all evening that, "Thank goodness for this legislation, because there have been bad agreements in the past that have hindered things from happening." It's a fallacy to think that way. Every contract that I've ever seen has had two-party agreement and signatures on it. It has not been just the union that got everything they wanted or just the

employer that got everything they wanted. Once the agreement is signed by both parties, it obviously signifies that both parties were happy with it and believed they could make a go of it. So it is not the union that imposed these contracts, any more than they are management-imposed. They come from both parties.

Part of this bill deals with strikes. Again I hear from across the aisle the inference that unions like strikes, union bosses like strikes, union members like strikes. I have been involved in strikes from both sides, with both management and union, and I'll tell you who lost each strike: It was both parties. Certainly the employers don't like strikes and their customers don't like strikes. For the employers it is a loss of revenue, and I believe the vast majority of them strive to reach an agreement that will not result in that. For the customers of the firm, whether they be people purchasing a house or a large corporation having a building built, a strike is a bad thing. But I can assure you that union members don't enter into a strike vote lightly. It costs them considerably financially to take part in it and they suffer as badly as anyone else does.

We need to recognize that not all strikes are over money. There are strikes over working conditions; there are strikes over safety. We must never overlook the fact that groups in this province have taken part in job actions or in strikes where money was not the issue; the safety of them and their customers was the issue.

Mr Gill: It's a privilege to take part in this debate. I want to make some comments on the speakers from Hamilton West, Northumberland and Prince Edward-Hastings.

The basic assumption as well as the basic fact is that everybody wants to work. Everybody wants to make sure they have a job. What happened about 10 years ago was that a lot of people who chose this great province of ours came here and found out that the job situation was very bad, that the opportunities were not there, and they started wondering whether they had made the right decision or whether they should have chosen another territory, another province or another country. Since we took over in 1995, we have created a net-net 701,000 jobs, and they come by design, they don't come by chance. This is because of the balanced budget and the negotiations we had and the people we listened to. Let me assure you, being the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, that we did our due diligence. We talked to the employer groups and we talked to the unions; we talked to everyone. I went as far away as Sault Ste Marie and Ottawa, and we are willing to listen again.

Yes, there was open discussion in the caucus: Should we abolish 1(4)? What should we do? We believe in compromise. We believe there is a place for everyone. We believe everybody should have their fair share. In this economic boom, everybody must flourish, but at the same time we don't want to overprice ourselves. There's no point in having \$40 union wages if you're going to work zero hours; \$40 per hour times zero hours is zero money to take home.

Mr Bartolucci: I'd like to thank the member for Hamilton West for his very thorough analysis of the bill. I would only wish that the government were more attentive during his presentation, because he does point out some very real weaknesses with this legislation and certainly confirms what we've been saying on this side of the House, that this legislation needs much revision in order to be effective and fair to both sides.

As well as the sections the member for Hamilton West pointed out, I have some concerns with section 150.2; certainly I have some concerns with section 160.1, which effectively strips bargaining rights across the province in certain geographical areas; as I mentioned earlier, I have major concerns with regard to the review period, the 18 months—that's section 163.6—all of which we, as the Liberal caucus, will be providing amendments for.

In conclusion to this debate this evening for the Liberal caucus, I would like the government to be aware of the fact that during the debate of this bill they have refused to acknowledge at any time that the opposition members have suggestions worth looking at and worth debating. I say that's very sad, because really the book had been closed on this legislation by the government the day this legislation was tabled.

You will have a chance to redeem yourselves when we go out to public hearings and you hear from people in the industry and when we do clause-by-clause. I challenge you, as the government, to accept the amendments both opposition parties will be making to this legislation.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the member for Hamilton West.

Mr Christopherson: I thank all the members who took the time to respond: the members for Sudbury, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, and Prince Edward-Hastings and Northumberland.

Let me say to the member who is the parliamentary assistant to the minister, I think you may have just

committed a Snobelen. If you'll recall, John Snobelen admitted, in front of a camera, to a group of Ministry of Education staff people that they had to invent a crisis in order to justify what they were going to do. You just advised us that you had a major debate in your caucus around whether 1(4) would remain or be pulled, or whether you would accept the compromise. Very clearly you had that discussion, because the gun has been pointed at the labour movement from the beginning. You had this caucus meeting to decide whether you were still going to pull the trigger or whether you were going to accept the compromise that Minister Stockwell had brought to the caucus. So I thank you, because I think you just aced that whole debate for me. I thank you for that; it was very generous of you.

The member for Northumberland talks about the fact that he thought, à la the Tories, that I'd be running back home and holding some fundraiser to get all kinds of financial benefit from what I'm doing. That wouldn't work too well in this case, though, I would say to the member. Number one, we don't operate the way you do, but secondly, Pat Dillon happens to be a big-time Liberal, always was—

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Well, listen, some sins must be forgiven in all of us, and with Pat, I forgive him that one.

But you talked about the domino effect. I worry about the domino effect the other way. I worry about the domino effect that if you keep the minimum wage down low enough and then force down construction workers, and then go after teachers, that you can just keep on going through to nurses, to firefighters, to police officers, right through all the jobs. That's your ultimate goal.

The Acting Speaker: It being almost 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2125.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
54A	2740	2	22	in one of the local papers, by Tracy Kibble. It's entitled,

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Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

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First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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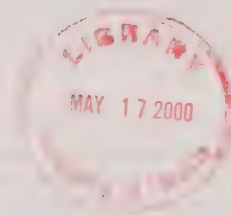
Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 9 May 2000

Mardi 9 mai 2000



**Speaker
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 9 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 9 mai 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Tucked away on page 12 in one of the small budget booklets is a line under "Northern Communities" which states, "The district of Muskoka will be included in northern Ontario for all government funding purposes." All atlas and geographic reference materials exclude the Muskokas from the boundaries of northern Ontario, but not this government. How absurd can Mike Harris get?

Over the last five years, the Mike Harris government has abandoned the north in every way possible. They have eliminated in excess of 4,000 government jobs from the north. They have made very little reinvestment in the north, and there is absolutely no plan to improve the economic face of northern Ontario. And now, the final insult is to include the Minister of Finance's southern vacation area in the north's funding envelope.

In 1988, the Liberal government implemented the northern Ontario heritage fund to expand the north's economic base. Not any more. The fund is now used to transfer to the government's wealthy corporate friends as they drive to their cottages in the Muskokas, all on the backs of hard-working northerners who are struggling to make out an existence in our region.

I am calling today on all northern political and business leaders to demand that the Mike Harris government stop its continual violation of northern Ontario with this latest crazy move and rescind the inclusion of the district of Muskoka in northern Ontario for funding purposes. If it isn't rescinded, there is no brighter future for northern Ontario. In fact, the budget fails the future of northern Ontario miserably.

ONTARIO POLICE MEMORIAL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Yesterday, I was proud to be part of an important ceremony at the Ontario Provincial Police general headquarters in Orillia to pay tribute to the lives of Corporal Evan Gilmore of the Spanish OPP, Constable Vaughan McKay of the Sudbury OPP, Senior Constable Chuck Mercier of the Niagara Falls OPP and Senior Constable Jim McFadden of the

Chatham-Kent OPP. Also in attendance was Commissioner Gwen Boniface.

The names of these officers were added to the honour roll of OPP officers who sacrificed their lives to serve the people of Ontario. Each time a police officer is killed in the line of duty, the whole province shares in the tragedy. This ceremony followed Sunday's unveiling of the Ontario Police Memorial, where family members, friends and fellow police officers joined to pay tribute to the 200 officers who lost their lives in the line of duty. The names of the four slain officers who were honoured yesterday are also part of the Ontario Police Memorial.

The memorial will help preserve the memories of those courageous officers who gave their lives while serving others. As well, the memorial will inspire today's front-line officers with the knowledge that society values them as they continue to face dangers each day. It's important to remember the words inscribed on the memorial, "Heroes in life not death."

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Northern Ontario residents are angry about the Harris government's refusal to deal with the inequities in the northern health travel grant. We have told this story in this Legislature over and over. Day after day, we have read petitions from northerners demanding fair treatment. We have written letter after letter describing the hardship northern Ontario families are experiencing because of the thousands of dollars they have to pay out of their own pockets to get the care they need. The answer from the Minister of Health is always the same, "We have no plans to change the health travel grant."

Even the obvious inequity in covering 100% of the costs for southern Ontario cancer patients who have to travel for care seemed to make no difference to the answer. Even a study showing \$5 million was being saved in efficiencies in the northern health travel grant program didn't lead to any increased dollars going into the budget for improvements to the support given to northerners.

We've had the same answer over and over until yesterday, when the Minister of Health said, "We'll review the program again." Why the change? Could it be because the Minister of Finance was asked a question about this on a radio open-line program last week? He seemed surprised that the problem existed. Where has he been? He did say he would look into it, so maybe that's

why we now have another review; no new money, no equity, no fairness, but another review.

And now that residents of Muskoka qualify for northern health travel grants, maybe the Minister of Finance, who will certainly want fairness for more of his constituents, will at least pay some attention to this matter and he may even find some money for health care for northerners, whether they be from the northwest, the northeast or from Muskoka.

STRATHROY EMERGENCY RESPONSE DAY

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for Lambton-Middlesex.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. It's always a pleasure to speak on their behalf, and I'm glad to see that I have my colleagues supporting me from Grey-Owen Sound, Perth-Middlesex, Cambridge, and of course, not to forget, Durham.

Wednesday, May 10, marks the 10th annual international Emergency Response Day, and I would like to take this opportunity to share with the House how the town of Strathroy in my riding plans to honour the brave and women who risk their lives to protect their fellow citizens.

Emergency Response Day began as Police Day in 1991. At that time, former Strathroy Police Chief Bob Smith and Constable Bob McIlmoyle decided to hold a large event at the town arena, with 21 police departments setting up displays. The following year, ambulance services, fire departments and other emergency services were incorporated into the event, and every year since, it has continued to grow due to the hard work of organizers. In fact, this year's event will be the largest of its kind in North America, with an estimated 7,000 people viewing more than 100 displays by 60 agencies from across Canada and the United States. As well, more than 30 elementary and nursery schools in the area will also participate in this event through safety awareness programs.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the support of the community, its volunteers and its charitable organizations. I ask the House to join me in commending Constable Bob McIlmoyle and the citizens of Strathroy for the continuing success of their Emergency Response Day celebrations, and may this event continue to grow as does Strathroy's community spirit.

WOODBINE RACETRACK

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): On March 29, 1,700 slot machines were installed at Woodbine Racetrack, and almost instantly the police forces at 23 division went to work. Officers, agents and inspectors started fielding questions on criminal acts that have invaded the area since the slot machines were installed:

"Fielding calls, that's all they do," denounced police commissioner Glen Paproski, "even though I assure the

community of our continuous competent service. Woodbine attracts some 15,000 people daily. Soon, with additional slot machines, this will grow to 20,000," warned the police commissioner, "while our staff and number of officers are the same as before."

Maybe the provincial government can't see the relationship between casinos and problems of public order. While other casinos, such as Niagara, Windsor or Rama, provide their own security service, Woodbine is served and supervised by the local police force, a force which is needed in the community, visible on the streets in the community. Local councillors have been requesting the addition of some 33 police officers to help cope with the sudden increase in calls.

I ask, and a community that saw three serious criminal acts and shootings within a week asks for protection and asks, why the government is so disinterested in public safety, crime prevention and peaceful neighbourhoods.

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MISSING CHILDREN

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The month of May 2000 marks Child Find's ninth annual Green Ribbon of Hope campaign. This year the campaign will be incorporated with National Missing Children's Day to be held on May 25. The purpose of the campaign is to increase public awareness about the tragedy of missing children everywhere, and to seek their safe return. It's also about educating parents and children on how to effectively protect themselves to reduce terrible incidences of missing children and teenagers.

Child Find hopes to distribute 300,000 green ribbons in Ontario during May, as a visible sign of support for missing children and their families. Members will recall the Green Ribbon of Hope campaign begun in 1992 by students at Holy Cross Secondary School to remember the abduction and murder of Kristen French.

Last Sunday, in conjunction with Child Find, Sudbury chapter, my office hosted a child check/fingerprint program. This free service was provided by volunteers trained by the police and was available to any child who came with a parent or legal guardian. In addition to the fingerprinting, each parent received a kit called All About Me, which provides a complete profile of the child once the kit is completed. If a child goes missing, this kit can be given to the police to immediately assist in their search.

We were overwhelmed by the positive response from the community. In five and a half hours our volunteers, Bernadette Dupuis and Sue Leblanc, fingerprinted or footprinted over 70 children and babies. Other parents who were in the mall but did not have their children at the time picked up the All About Me kit to complete it until such time as they could get the fingerprinting done.

Thanks to Bernadette Dupuis and Sue Leblanc for their tremendous work, and thanks to Child Find for making us aware of this endeavour.

ROB COLLINGS AND MARK ROTH

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): To mark Education Week in Ontario, I'd like to recognize two outstanding teachers in my riding of Perth-Middlesex.

Rob Collings and Mark Roth both teach technical studies at Northwestern secondary school in Stratford. In addition to teaching, they have gone into their community to promote the importance of a technical education in today's technological society. They have talked with industry, tradespeople, the chamber of commerce and other educators about the importance of linking technical courses with the demands of the labour force to help meet the shortages of skilled tradespeople. They have also helped to establish the Community Technical Training Centre to address the local demand for skilled individuals in technical areas.

Mark and Rob also made a very informative presentation to the Task Force on Rural Economic Renewal in St Mary's. During their March break, Mark and Rob have workshops for primary school students to show them the value of technical studies.

This Saturday, Mark and Rob are hosting a technical open house and spring sale, which includes a breakfast for co-op employers and industrial suppliers and a sale of items that students made in the classroom.

Rob and Mark are to be commended for their exemplary approach to teaching and for their perseverance in promoting the benefits of a technical education. Please join with me in recognizing Mark Roth and Rob Collings, two of the finest teachers in Ontario.

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTIONS

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I would like to ask yet again—it's not a question today, but I'd like to continue to ask the Minister of Community and Social Services how he can justify his unwarranted head tax of \$925 on international adoptions.

Interjection: Shame, shame.

Mr Cordiano: It's a real shame.

These are people who go through an incredible amount of emotional grief to adopt internationally. I have pointed out time and again in this House that there is no fee for domestic adoptions. The home study that is conducted is the same for both domestic and international adoptions. The paperwork involved is the same.

It's simply not reasonable that the minister would want to exact \$925 from people adopting internationally. In other jurisdictions, the United States, for example, a \$5,000 tax credit is being offered for this type of an adoption. In fact, they're thinking of increasing it to \$10,000.

When we passed legislation in this House two years ago, unanimously, I might add, there was no mention of a \$925 head tax. So it's time for the minister to stand in this House and say he will rescind this tax, because it's odious and not justifiable.

LAB-INTERLINK

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Labotix Automation in Peterborough has recently merged with LAB-InterLink Inc of Omaha, Nebraska, combining LAB-InterLink's extensive software with Labotix's hardware expertise to provide the best open automation system available in the market today.

I'm very excited about the merger of these two companies, which means the largest installed base of clinical laboratory automation equipment in North America, along with specimen transport and robotic systems to the medical industry. The company's products work with virtually all of the leading manufacturers' laboratory instruments.

The merger would allow LAB-InterLink to provide their hospital clients with a comprehensive automation solution that has not been available to them before. At present, approximately 45 of North America's 5,000 clinical laboratories are taking advantage of automation, and LAB-InterLink is responsible for nearly half of these installations. This company will provide leading hospitals across North America and Europe with automation solutions to allow them to accurately test while controlling costs.

Congratulations on a partnership that ensures a successful future.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): In the members' west gallery we have Mr Jim Wiseman, who was the member for Durham West in the 35th Parliament.

SPECIAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND
PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): On Tuesday, May 2, the House leader of the official opposition raised a point of privilege with respect to the chief electoral officer's report called Meeting the Needs of a Modern Electorate. The member asserted that the distribution of this report to the MPPs and the public was a breach of privilege.

I want to start by considering the matter of privilege. The principle of privilege as it relates to reports to the House requires that members receive copies of the report before they are made public. This was done, as the member stated when he made his point of privilege. The report was delivered to the Speaker's office and subsequently, as is our practice, to the members' mailboxes. Certain copies were then delivered to the press. This is the process that is usually followed.

The member also contended that the distribution was not in compliance with the standing orders. Pursuant to standing order 39(a), once a report has been deposited, whether or not the House is in session, it is "deemed for all purposes to have been presented to or laid before the House."

Since the report was delivered to all members prior to it being made public, I find no prima facie case of

privilege has been made out. In addition, the standing orders clearly require that the reports, once delivered, are deemed to have been presented to or laid before the House.

The fact that the Speaker announces the tabling of such a report is not specifically required under the standing orders. However, it is the practice to make such announcements at the earliest opportunity. In this instance, there was a delay in presenting the report to the House and the recording of it in Votes and Proceedings. For that I apologize and assure all members that steps have been taken to prevent such a delay from occurring again.

I want to thank the member for Windsor West for raising that with me.

VISITORS

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain):

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I recognize a special group of visitors in the members' gallery today. The delegation is from Suxhou College in Jiangsu province, China, a province of 60 million people. Suxhou College has a developing partnership with Toronto's George Brown College. With the delegation is Mr William Wen Jr, the son of Mr William Wen, an Order of Canada recipient. I want to welcome our visitors to the Legislature and to Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): It's not a point of order, but we do welcome our guests.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TOWN OF GREATER NAPANEE ACT, 2000

Mrs Dombrowsky moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr22, An Act respecting the Town of Greater Napanee.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I rise in the House today to announce increased compensation from the Ontario government for people who are infected with hepatitis C through tainted blood, people who should have been able to depend on our country's blood system,

people who through no fault of their own now have a debilitating disease, people who our government believes should be treated fairly and equitably and with compassion.

Financial assistance for people who fall ill is somewhat unusual in Canada. We're used to seeing sufferers of a disease get health care, not compensation. After all, every Canadian who gets sick has access to necessary medical care through our public provincial health care system. But in the case of hepatitis C, the victims have needs that go beyond medical care, and in the case of hepatitis C victims who contracted the disease from tainted blood, they suffer this illness through no fault of their own because Canada's blood system failed them.

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Let me talk for a moment about what hepatitis C means and the impact it has on victims. This is a devastating, debilitating disease. Many victims have needs that extend far beyond health care. Many victims are no longer able to earn a living. Some can't even perform basic work around the house, such as cutting the grass or shovelling snow. Yet even if they are too disabled to work, they still need to pay a mortgage. Even if they are too sick to provide for their families, they still need to put food on the table.

That's where financial assistance comes in, and that's why we see financial assistance as a moral imperative. These are innocent victims. These are people who went into the hospital, received transfusions, and ended up with this disease. Their only mistake was to put their faith in Canada's blood system. To dismiss their needs based on legal technicalities and arbitrary cut-offs, to treat this as a courtroom exercise rather than an issue of compassion, is an abdication of our moral responsibility as governments.

As members are aware, those victims who were infected between January 1, 1986, and July 1, 1990, benefit from a nation-wide plan of financial assistance. Our government, along with thousands and thousands of Canadians from coast to coast, didn't think that compensating only some victims was fair. We wanted to ensure that no innocent victim of tainted blood is left out in the cold. We wanted to abide by the recommendations of Mr Justice Horace Krever, to live up to the spirit of his report.

The commission of inquiry on the blood system in Canada was established in October 1993, and its report was released more than four years later. During that time, Justice Krever heard from 474 witnesses over 247 days of hearings. The testimony and submissions filled 50,000 pages of transcript, and 100,000 pages of exhibits were filed. His study was detailed, it was exhaustive, and it was complete. Mr Justice Krever said on page 1,045 of his report, "Compensating some needy sufferers and not others cannot, in my opinion, be justified." We agree.

In accordance with Justice Krever's recommendation, we would have preferred to extend compensation to everyone by working co-operatively with the federal government on a national plan that treated all victims

fairly. Unfortunately, this was not to be. Our government was left with no choice but to act unilaterally, to do the right thing and to do the responsible thing.

We were the first to offer help to all those infected with hepatitis C through tainted blood. We were the first to actually put cheques in the hands of those who needed them. We were the first government in Canada to treat all the victims of this tragedy fairly, equitably and with compassion. Today I'm proud to announce that each Ontario hepatitis C victim who was excluded from the existing compensation agreement—that is, anyone infected before 1986 or after July 1990—will receive the same estimated provincial financial assistance as the average person who was included in that timeframe.

To accomplish this, we are increasing payments from \$10,000 to \$25,000 for each person. Our plan is fair; it is equitable; it is compassionate. We recognize the human toll of this tragedy. We're doing what we can to help all the victims and their families get on with their lives. It is the right thing to do. It is the fair thing to do.

Our initial support was applauded, I know, and supported by all members of this Legislature regardless of party. I encourage all members of the Legislature to share today's announcement with their constituents so they can get the help they need and they deserve.

However, our decision only extends equitable provincial compensation to all victims. All victims will not be truly equal until the federal government does the same. I'm asking all members to join me in urging the federal government to abandon its arbitrary, exclusionary compensation scheme and to agree to help all victims who contracted hepatitis C through Canada's blood system.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The House has just heard from Premier Harris how firmly our government is committed to fair treatment for all the innocent victims of tainted blood in Ontario. Hepatitis C is a blood-borne virus that can have devastating effects on its victims, leaving them unable to work, pay their mortgages or provide food for their families. This is the serious human cost of the disease.

As the House is aware, Justice Krever recommended in 1997 that provinces and territories devise compensation plans to help people suffering the serious consequences of receiving tainted blood or blood products. The Premier has just reminded us of how the federal government responded to Justice Krever and to the victims of tainted blood.

I can tell you that I am very proud of our government's response, and that pride is shared by people across this province. First, Ontario is contributing more than 40% of the provincial share for the federal-provincial-territorial hepatitis C settlement agreement to assist victims who contracted the disease between 1986 and 1990. But more importantly, Ontario has gone further, as the Premier has indicated, than any other government in Canada. We have extended fair and equitable financial

assistance to all victims of hepatitis C, regardless of when they were infected.

Today our government is more than doubling our original compensation payment from \$10,000 to \$25,000 for each person who contracted hepatitis C through the blood system in Ontario before 1986 and after 1990. This increase means that our government is offering the same level of provincial compensation to all victims of this terrible tragedy. In total, we have set aside over \$300 million to help the individuals and their families whose lives have been changed forever by hepatitis C. So far, several thousand Ontarians have come forward to claim assistance and more than 2,100 people have already received \$10,000 cheques. What this means is that only in Ontario are victims of tainted blood treated fairly and equitably, no matter when they were infected.

Of course, Ontario's \$22-billion health system will continue to provide top-quality health care services to support all hepatitis C sufferers. That includes drug therapies and liver transplants, physician care, in-home nursing and homemaking services that will help people with hepatitis C live longer and maintain the highest quality of life.

Our government is committed to fairness and we are doing the right thing for all Ontarians who were infected with hepatitis C through the blood supply.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): On behalf of our caucus, I want to indicate that we are certainly pleased that more of the \$200-million fund that was set aside to compensate victims who contracted hepatitis C before 1986 or after 1990 is going to flow to those victims. Our caucus had called for the extension of this program some two years ago. We expressed our support for the program when the government announced it, I believe about a year and a half ago, and we fully agree with all that has been said by both the Premier and the Minister of Health today about the physical, financial and human anguish of the sufferers of hepatitis C.

1400

I believe the announcement today will alleviate some of the concerns that had begun to arise about when the \$200 million in funds would actually flow to the victims of hepatitis C. The House will be aware that there are actually two funds, which I think we have to consider to be quite separate. One is the fund that is part of the federal-provincial program that's been agreed to. I believe Ontario's contribution to that fund is some \$113 million. Regrettably—I would say tragically—the flow of funds under the federal-provincial program is tied up in the courts. The second fund is the \$200-million fund that came from the Ontario commitment to extend hepatitis C compensation to victims who contracted the disease before 1986 and after 1990.

Up to this point in time, as the Minister of Health has recognized, the dollars have flowed to some 2,100 victims at \$10,000 per victim, which is a total of about \$21 million to \$22 million that has actually flowed, leaving some \$180 million in the program. I understand approximately another \$33 million will flow, which

means we've got about \$53 million that has been expended from the \$200-million program. I think it's a fair question to ask how soon the rest of the \$200 million is going to flow to the victims of hepatitis C.

The hepatitis C society was assured in February of this year that all of the \$200 million would flow. There was some consternation when a spokesperson for the Ministry of Health indicated in February that the \$200 million was just an estimate. I trust that the original agreement to flow all of the \$200 million to hepatitis C victims will hold. We would be interested in knowing how many more victims the minister expects will be identified, and how long it will take to flow additional dollars to those individuals or whether there may be further compensation to people currently receiving those dollars.

I also want to recognize, with some concern, that the government has today used what I believe is in fact a compassionate action—I will not often acknowledge that in this House about this government's approach to health care, but I think this is an act of compassion; at least I believe that to be the case—as a rather thinly veiled context in which to launch yet another partisan political attack on the federal government. We so rarely see acts of compassion from this government that I would think they would want it to stand on its merits, and to provide leadership through action and not just continue partisan bickering with the federal government.

Fifty million dollars to victims of hepatitis C is something the Ontario public most certainly supports, as we do. It's something positive. We trust the balance of the \$200 million will flow, just as we trust that soon all hepatitis C victims will be compensated.

I think Ontarians want their dollars to be spent on health care. They want them to be spent in a way which is compassionate. I think they agree not only with compensation for hepatitis C victims, but that their dollars should be spent on compassionate health care for others. I find myself looking at something that I don't think Ontarians agree with, and that is a \$1-billion "The cheque's in the mail" advertising campaign.

I find myself wondering what this government could have done with that \$1 billion if it wanted to be truly compassionate when it comes to health care. I find myself wondering why they wouldn't want to use that \$1 billion to double the amount of money that's available for home care so that victims of hepatitis C and others who need home care are able to get all the care they need and not have that care rationed, as this government has done. I wonder if they wouldn't have been able to find maybe a few thousand dollars out of that \$1 billion to give care to a man who died, a man who came to North Bay to receive care from his daughter and wasn't able to receive home care in Ontario because he had just come from Quebec.

I wonder if they couldn't have found a few thousand dollars to provide support to a woman with terminal cancer who had just returned to Ontario from teaching English in Korea and wasn't eligible for OHIP coverage. I wonder if they might have found money for a con-

stituent of mine, Mr Rawlyk, who spent \$10,000 out of his own pocket to get the care he needed. And maybe, if they were truly compassionate, they'd find some dollars to support a meaningful disabilities act.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I'm pleased to have an opportunity to respond to the statement by the Premier today in the House. It's the job of the opposition to hold the government accountable, and I honestly believe that part of that is paying tribute when the government is doing the right thing. Today the government is doing the right thing. I have to say that it's almost a day for celebration when you hear the Premier of this province use the words "fairness," "equity" and "compassion" and actually mean it, so I applaud him. I would love to be in a position to get him to hold those standards in all other areas of government action, but then of course he'd be a New Democrat and not a member of the Progressive Conservative Party.

On this particular issue today, I think this announcement continues to show leadership in this area and I appreciate and support, on behalf of our caucus, the announcement of the Premier. I want to go a bit further and say I also support the call, the urgent call, to ask the federal government to participate in this. Unlike my colleague who just responded, I don't think it is always a thinly veiled partisan attack to point out the obvious. On the basis of compassion and equity, it is important that all people who have been victims of the tainted blood fiasco or their families who have been equally victimized by this, are treated equally.

That's all this is all about: It's the right thing to do. So our support to you on the initiative and our support to you on the call to the federal government to join in. I applaud the announcement today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question today is for the Premier. Yesterday I exposed your political rewards program. That's the program where friends make contributions to the Mike Harris party and they receive special treatment from the Mike Harris government.

Today I have another example, and I'm going to ask a page to come here and bring over copies of two deeds. Premier, I've got a couple of deeds here, one that provides for the purchase of government land, sold by the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Chris Hodgson, in November 1998. This same buyer sells the land in February 1999 and realizes a \$3.8-million profit. He buys the land for \$2.8 million, sells it for \$6.6 million, and realizes a tidy profit of \$3.8 million in under three months. To make matters worse, he didn't sell all of the property. In fact, to get a profit of \$3.8 million, he

only had to sell one fifth of the property—one fifth of the property and he earns a tidy profit of \$3.8 million.

Premier, once again on your watch Ontario taxpayers were ripped off. Can you please tell us, what excuse will you be serving up in this House today?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the member knows, as the taxpayers of this province know, that we take any allegation of wrongdoing very seriously. That's why there is an independent audit reviewing sales transactions dating back to 1985. It's why we fully support the investigation by the police, who are working closely with the independent outside auditors. Any information the member has that he thinks may fall within that category we certainly encourage him—in fact it's his duty—to turn over to the audit team and the police, and I hope he's doing that.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, let me tell you about the guy who cashed in at the taxpayers' expense this time. You would know him well. His name is Saverio Montemaro, and yes, he's an associate of Nick Cortellucci. That's the gentleman we talked about yesterday, the guy who was given a taxpayer-funded, interest-free mortgage.

These two people, Premier, are your top bagmen here in Ontario. They've hosted Premier's dinners and they've run countless fundraisers for cabinet ministers. They have raised millions of dollars for you and your party. That's not all. These two gentlemen and their companies have given you almost \$500,000 of their own money since 1995. Premier, why should taxpayers be funding your political rewards program?

1410 Hon Mr Harris: They have of course contributed to the Liberal Party too, although I don't know why, given the policies that are so anti-business and anti-jobs and anti-growth. Nonetheless, it's certainly their freedom to donate to the party of their choice. I don't know why anybody who wants jobs or growth or development donates to your party, which thinks "profit" is a dirty word.

Aside from that, I think the member is well aware that only the independent, arm's-length ORC is aware of any of the details of any of the transactions. I can assure you that they, like all agencies of our government and ministries, take no account of any political contributions to your party or our party. In fact, I doubt they are privy to any of that information. If the member believes there is something wrong with donating to a political party, say so. If he believes there is anything wrong with any of the transactions the ORC has carried out, he knows we have a full investigation underway. Please do the responsible thing and turn it over to the authorities so we can all get to the bottom of it.

Mr McGuinty: There is nothing wrong with making contributions to any political party in Ontario. What is wrong is when you and your government allow yourselves to be unduly influenced by those contributions and end up, at taxpayers' expense, rewarding your friends with deals worth millions and millions of dollars in profits. That is what's wrong, Premier.

Again, we are talking about one buyer who made close to \$500,000 in contributions to your party over the last five years. One buyer realizes a profit of close to \$3.8 million by selling off only one fifth of the purchased land. If he were to sell off the rest of this land at the same price, he would realize a cool profit of close to \$30 million. That's quite a deal. You chip in half a million to the Tory party and get \$30 million back. This has to be the gold card version of the program, extra rewards for your extra-special friends.

Once more, Premier, stand up and tell us, because you haven't answered this question yet: Why is this kind of activity on your watch in the interests of Ontario taxpayers?

Hon Mr Harris: I find it ironic that the leader of the Liberal Party has said our goal was to get more corporate contributions, when in fact Phil Olsen, head fundraiser for the Ontario Liberal Party, said last year that in 1995 the Liberal Party got about 79% of its funding from corporations and 21% from individuals. Let me quote Mr Olsen—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harris: No, that's not a mistake. He said this is the Ontario Liberal Party, not the Tory party. He's right. Every year on record, the Liberal Party gets more money, is more dependent and averages larger-sized contributions from corporations, including developers. Every year the Ontario PC Party gets less on average, less in total and less in contributions. Why? Because the support for this Conservative Party is across all—it's \$10, \$25, \$50, \$100. It's from all Ontarians. The only party dependent—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Premier's time is up. New question, the leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: My question is for the Chair of Management Board.

Premier, what we're talking about here again is your—

The Speaker: Order. The member must address his question to the Chair of Management Board, if he would, please.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I want to turn now to the fact that yesterday, in response to questions from reporters, you said you had stopped the practice at the ORC of lending money to buyers, and that this practice had been stopped for some time. I have in my hand another loan document showing that on April 20 this year you gave another mortgage back to a buyer. You loaned money again to a buyer who was interested in buying government land.

My question is: Why did you tell reporters that you were out of the loan business when you are still lending money to buyers of government land in Ontario?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): If the leader of the opposition checks the record, I stated that I personally think we're not a bank, that it's not in the interests of taxpayers. He would know there is an independent board of the Ontario Realty

Corp that looks after the day-to-day operation of real estate transactions. That board goes through the process of being before your party and other parties in this Legislature for review. They were endorsed unanimously by your party, and they are accountable for their actions.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you can't dance around this unless the name of the dance is the cabinet shuffle. Either you were wrong yesterday, or you led the media down the garden path. You can't claim you have no responsibility whatsoever for land sales, land flips, land giveaways and money giveaways here in Ontario. The buck stops with you. That's the principle of ministerial responsibility.

For everything that is connected with the government in Ontario, there is a minister who is ultimately responsible. That person, in all these cases connected with the ORC and all these land flips, Minister, is you and nobody else. The facts show that the ORC is still in the loan business today. You said, "This is a bad practice." Ontarians now know it is a bad practice.

Tell me now, because you didn't answer the question: Why is it that on your watch today in Ontario the ORC is still giving loans to people who want to buy government land?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The leader of the opposition has heard on numerous occasions that we on this side of the House take these allegations of wrongdoing very seriously. That's why we have an independent, outside audit reviewing the sales transactions dating back to 1995. That's why we fully support the ongoing investigation by the police, who are working closely with the independent, outside auditors.

The fact is, the ORC is at arm's length from the government, an independent corporation led by an independent board of directors who are responsible for the transactions that it enters into. We are trying to get to the bottom of this, through the proper process. If you have specific evidence or allegations of wrongdoing, by all means, share them with the auditors and with the police. That's the proper thing to do. We're trying to get to the bottom of this, in the interests of the taxpayer, and I suggest you do the same.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, take a look at this document. You are getting in deeper every day. This is a scandal. It's your scandal. It's all about you.

It gets worse. The company you gave this loan to, coincidentally, is a pal of the Mike Harris government. In 1999, this particular buyer—borrower—gave \$5,000 to the Mike Harris party. The board of directors is not responsible for this scandal. You appointed the board of directors. The employees aren't responsible for this scandal. You hired the employees. You are responsible for this scandal. All this has happened on your watch. It's happened in the last five years.

There is a stink emanating from the ORC, and you have refused to deal with this matter to date. Instead of taking what you can for your friends, why don't you take responsibility for all this matter and resign?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I encourage the leader of the opposition, instead of making things up, to do the responsible thing. If you have evidence, hand it over to the independent auditors or the police, and let's do the right thing together to get the bottom of it to make sure the taxpayers' interests have been protected and will be protected in the future.

SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. You were a teacher for a short time. You should know how important extracurricular activities are in our schools. You should know how much teachers give in terms of energy, creativity and all the work, time and dedication that goes above and beyond the call of duty.

How do you think you can command, that you can demand that teachers give this time, this creativity? How are you going to take from them what people can only give of their free will?

1420

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): You're right, I was a teacher, although it seems so long ago now that perhaps this political experience is aging me faster. I was involved in "extracurricular activities," to quote your words, from lunchroom supervision to ski teams to athletics and others. The only difference between the way you phrase the question and the way I thought of it, and the way I think 100% of the teachers think of it—there may be the odd exception in the union leadership—is that we didn't think of it as going above and beyond the call of duty, we considered it part of the job.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you should know the effect your heavy-handedness, your bully tactics, are having out there. Take for example the case of Ken MacKay, who is a tremendous baseball coach at Brampton Centennial Secondary School. A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to congratulate him on his coaching record, a record of 75 wins and six losses. This is what he said when he was told about your plan to force him to give what he can only give of his own free will: "I feel like it's a slap in the face, because we're being forced to do something we already do as volunteers." Then he goes on to say, "If the government goes ahead with its plans, I will no longer be coaching."

What this is all about is clear: To finance your tax cuts for corporations and for the well-off, you're continuing to try to squeeze money out of schools. You're continuing to try to squeeze money out of school programs and lay off teachers, and then try to make extracurricular activities mandatory. Don't you realize, Premier, that this is actually going to have a destructive effect, that this is going to blow up in your face, that you can't force out of people something they can only give of their own free will? Don't you realize you're going to destroy extracurricular activities even more?

Hon Mr Harris: Nobody has been more supportive of the front-line classroom teachers than have I. Nobody has been more supportive of those teachers. Nobody has been more on the record as saying, from experience as a trustee and from my friends in the teaching profession, that there is a lot more to the job than simply four hours and 10 or 15 minutes each and every day. Nobody has talked more about the counselling, about the remedial, about the after-school, about the lunch room, about the graduations. I have always been on the record and very supportive and tell you that as a teacher, as a trustee, the majority I talk to consider it just part of the job. So do we.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary, member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to tell you, Premier, that 99% of the boards are providing extracurricular activities at the moment, except Durham obviously, where the only reason teachers stopped participating in extracurricular activities was that your heavy-handed tactics and your own hand-picked arbitrator forced an unacceptable contract on them. But 99% of the boards are providing it freely, as part of the job, voluntarily. What you're about to do is change this. Premier, your funding formula has taken money out of the classroom; it's a fact. It has forced an increase in class sizes, a reduction in the number of teachers and drastic cuts in all kinds of activities, including supplies. Teachers and parents are looking for stability, yet at every turn you continue to offer instability. Why do you do that?

Hon Mr Harris: First of all, the member is incorrect. We were the first party in the last 10 years to say, "School boards and unions, you cannot negotiate an increase in class sizes." We made that illegal and we froze that because, you're right, class sizes were going up under your administration and the early part of our administration, because irresponsible school boards—and unions, by the way—agreed to do that to get more money. We stopped that.

You say that with 99% of the boards and the teachers it's working very well. Then those 99% will welcome the other 1% doing the same, because in Durham we've had two years where students have had no graduations, they've had no football, they've had no sports, they've had no extracurricular activities. They've had four hours and 15 minutes, and nothing else. This is unacceptable, and I'm positive that if in 99% of the schools it's working well, they will now welcome legislation that will say 100% of our kids are entitled to a complete education.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My second question is also for the Premier. Yesterday a cancer survivor, Anna Watson, travelled here to Queen's Park from northern Ontario. She wants to know why your government will provide full funding for a cancer patient

from southern Ontario—airfare, accommodation, taxis, food cost—coming to thousands of dollars, but she as a cancer patient from northern Ontario, when she has to travel to Thunder Bay, has to drive four hours, sometimes over icy highways, and has to pay virtually the full cost herself. Yes, she'd like to fly, and it would be physically easier on her, but she can't afford it. She wants to know why you're so generous with some cancer patients and you give the back of the hand to others.

We didn't get an answer from your Minister of Health. She said something about a review. The discrimination is obvious. The vice-chair of Cancer Care Ontario calls it health care apartheid. Your finance minister, the Deputy Premier, acknowledges there's an injustice here. When you've got so much money to give away to corporations in tax breaks, couldn't you at this time, Premier, provide some help to cancer patients in northern Ontario, some of whom miss their cancer treatment appointments because they can't afford the travel costs? Can't you do something about that?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the minister could respond.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): In response to the question regarding the travel grant, I think it's very important to keep in mind that since 1995 our government has expanded cancer care funding by \$155 million. At the same time, it is very important to keep in mind that it was Cancer Care Ontario that put in place a program to re-refer people who were waiting for radiation. The money that has been set aside was requested by Cancer Care Ontario and it is specifically for people who are re-referred.

At the same time, we've been expanding the cancer facilities in northern Ontario. We're expanding in Thunder Bay, we're opening a new cancer centre in Sault Ste Marie and we are expanding the facilities in Sudbury as well. We've also managed to expand the number of specialists available in the north by almost 140.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Minister, people in Pickle Lake, Red Lake, Fort Frances and Dryden will always have to travel four and five hours to Thunder Bay for cancer treatment. People in Timmins, in New Liskeard and in other places in northeastern Ontario will always have to travel three and four hours for cancer treatment. They're not ever going to be able to get that in their own community. For the last 13 months you have discriminated against these patients. You were the one who gave Cancer Care Ontario special funding so it could send people out of their home communities to access cancer care in Buffalo, in Kingston and in northern Ontario. But when it comes to dealing seriously with cancer patients in northern Ontario, you have no money.

Minister, there is no need for review. The discrimination is absolutely clear. Today you and your Premier got up and said you were going to provide fair treatment for hepatitis C victims. That's the right thing to do.

Today you should also provide fair treatment for northern cancer patients. When are you going to cover their costs?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think it's very important to keep in mind the fact that there is no travel grant for people in the south. Cancer Care Ontario has elected to make available additional money to re-refer patients who cannot be treated with radiation in the province. I think it's very important that we distinguish between who is receiving the money. It was a recommendation of Cancer Care Ontario and it is for those people who are being re-referred. As I also said yesterday, we will be reviewing the northern health travel grant.

1430

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Premier, I want to return to the matter of the land flip that I just talked about and I want to give you an opportunity this time to explain to Ontario taxpayers, since you haven't done that yet, why this is in their interest.

Again, in the first deed you sell the land to one of the largest contributors to your party. You sell 231 acres for \$2.8 million. In the second deed that same buyer sells off one fifth of the land—that's only 42 of those 231 acres—and realizes a profit of \$3.8 million. This buyer bought the land at \$12,000 an acre and sold it off for—get this—\$156,000 per acre. In just three months they made \$3.8 million in profit by flipping just one fifth of the land.

There was a time in Ontario when Mike Harris projected himself as the Taxfighter, and he was there to protect the interests of Ontario taxpayers. It seems to me now, Premier, that what you're doing is protecting the interests of your contributors. Tell us now, because you have refused to do so so far, why is this deal, this land flip, in the interests of Ontario taxpayers?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): It may be; it may not be. You don't know; I don't know. The ORC are the ones who made the sale. If you believe this specific one deserves to be looked at, and raising it here, I'm sure it will be. We'll have it looked at, and if something inappropriate was done by anybody at the ORC then they'll be held accountable. That's the process. Nobody has upheld that process, in spite of all the yelling and screaming and interventions and yippity-yapping, instead of listening—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harris: You see, that does not change the truth. The truth is the truth, in spite of all your screaming and yelling. If you don't want to hear the truth—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Premier, take his seat. The member for Sudbury, last warning. The last warning to the member for Sudbury. I'm afraid the Premier's time is up. Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: It's great to hear from Tweedledee. We've heard from Tweedledum before. Now we know that neither of you is prepared to take responsibility for what's been going on when it comes to land flips in Ontario.

Again, there was a time when you said you got into this job in the first place to protect the interests of Ontario taxpayers. Why is it that you have suddenly decided you're not there for Ontario taxpayers and instead you're there for your contributors? Why didn't we see that as part of the Common Sense Revolution? Why wasn't that part of the party platform? Why didn't you proclaim to the world at large, Premier, that the real reason you wanted this job was so that you could go in there and look after your friends who made large contributions to your party?

Once more, Premier, you haven't answered this question yet: Why is it that this deal, this land flip that realized an obscene profit for one of your largest contributors, is in the interests of Ontario taxpayers?

Hon Mr Harris: You don't know and I don't know, and the minister doesn't know. The ORC will have to be accountable for the sale. That is the process. We're having a look at that.

But let me tell you this: For a party that voted against every tax cut, voted against every one of the 156 tax cuts brought in by this government to benefit taxpayers, for a party that ran up deficit after deficit and could never balance the books—and according to the auditor tried to say they did but couldn't—to pretend that this spendthrift party that opposed every tax reduction, opposed every job creation, to pretend that you are on the side of the taxpayer is the height of total hypocrisy. If that's not acceptable, I take it back—

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the member to withdraw that comment, please.

Hon Mr Harris: Yes, I withdraw it again, Mr Speaker.

COMPENSATION FOR HEPATITIS C PATIENTS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Health. I was pleased to hear the Premier announce that our government has extended financial assistance for those persons who contacted hepatitis C in Ontario. Minister, through this announcement I am confident the government is demonstrating further its commitment to ensuring quality equitable health care for all Ontarians. Could you please take this opportunity to inform the house of this very important announcement?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The announcement relating to hepatitis C is an indication that our government wishes to treat all individuals in the province, regardless of when they contracted hepatitis C, and we will, as of today, increase the \$10,000 compensation to those individuals and it will become \$25,000 immediately. Again, those individuals who have applied to OHCAP will receive that additional money.

Mr Dunlop: Through your announcement and your statement in the House, I understand that the federal government is only providing assistance to those victims

who contracted hepatitis C through tainted blood between the years 1986 and 1990. Is the federal government once again not living up to its commitment to Canadians and Ontarians alike to provide equitable health services through the provinces?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Yes, unfortunately the federal government in recent years has been abdicating its responsibility in the health field not only to Ontarians but to all Canadians. In fact, Liberal icon Tom Kent, who we know is the social policy godfather for the Liberals, when he was recently testifying before a Senate subcommittee, said: "The federal government is the biggest threat to the future of medicare. The Chrétien government is starving the public health system of badly needed cash and holding up any chance of meaningful reform negotiations with the provinces." Unfortunately, he goes on to say that when federal Finance Minister Paul Martin slashed health care transfers in his 1995 budget, that really was the final straw that broke the camel's back.

Again, we have not only people in this province but we have an outstanding Liberal who says it is—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the Minister of Health's time is up.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): My question is for the Minister of Education. I want to talk to you about the charade your ministry is perpetrating around funding for school kids in this province. You know what a lot of the public doesn't, which is that the government you're associated with has cut funding to school kids in this province by \$1.6 billion since you took office. You have done that in a number of ways, none of them up front, all of them hidden from view. You took \$800 million away from the budget, part of that by not renewing the social contract from the previous government, but the rest of it, direct cuts. You didn't make allowances for inflation or enrolment increases, which is another \$745 million.

Today you stand up here in Education Week and you try to point to the teachers, to the boards and everyone else. It's you and your government that are to blame for what is going on in Durham, for what you want to inflict on the whole province. Minister, will you stand up today and admit that it's your funding that is causing problems for school kids all across the province?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): First of all, a bit of a history lesson: It was not this government that did the social contract; it was the previous NDP government that did the social contract.

Second, it's interesting that he's claiming we've cut all this money out of education. That's not what he said at the estimates committee when we went through this with him. For example, we have increased funding in this province, across the province, to boards. It was over \$12 billion in 1995-96 and it is now well over \$13 billion and growing, with the recent budget announcements—for example, more money out there in the elementary panel

to bring down class sizes in kindergarten to grade 3; more money for special reading help and support for those children in early grades; more money for special education, a 12% increase. As a matter of fact, the funding increase this year—and this is before the budget enhancements—was double the rate of enrolment.

I appreciate the question. Do we need more money? We always can use more money in health or education and a whole range of areas, and we're putting new money in.

Mr Kennedy: You should be embarrassed to have to play that kind of game. You know there is no new direction for education. It's just a new deception, because you're trying to say that somehow there is money in education. Your own figures show that you have cut \$800 million directly from education budgets. Your share of education funding is down to \$4 billion.

In addition, when we look at specific lines, transportation is cut \$28 million, pupil accommodation for schools is down \$153 million, adult education is cut \$36 million, special education is down almost \$300 million. But Minister, here's the kicker: You go and say you're cutting school board administration and, Minister, you haven't cut it at all. Last year you increased the funding for school board administration—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock. Order. The member's time is almost up, if he could get to the question.

1440

Mr Kennedy: Will you at least bring some dignity to that office and admit that the funding that you've taken away from kids is somewhere on your priority list. You missed it during the budget, but they want to hear from you during Education Week. Take responsibility, show some respect and starting funding kids' education in this province and—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the member's time is up.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I don't know why we spent the time we spent in estimates, going through the ministry budget with the honourable member. He obviously didn't listen. He obviously didn't understand. But I've got to tell you, in 1995-96, it was over \$12 billion. This year and next year, with the enhancements, it's well over \$13 billion. Even under the new math that's more money.

And I've got to tell you, there is more money for special-needs children out there. Do we need more? Of course we need more. We've increased it three years in a row—a 12% increase in one year alone. More money for more elementary school teachers—1,000 more teachers.

The honourable member over there is deliberately misleading the people of this House.

The Speaker: Order. The minister will have to withdraw that.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I will withdraw that if he withdraws that he said I said something untrue.

The Speaker: No. Last warning. You withdraw it, or you don't and I will name you. You either withdraw it

right away or I name you. Simple as that. Are you going to withdraw it?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Certainly, Mr Speaker.

PROFESSIONAL BOXING

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Take a seat. Stop the clock for a minute please. The member is trying to ask the question. Everybody else has been patient. The member has been patient in trying to ask his question. Sorry.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister of Labour, come to order. Member for Parkdale-High Park, come to order. Last warning for the member for Parkdale-High Park as well.

Member for Oshawa, sorry for the delay.

Mr Ouellette: This question may be applicable. My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

The province of Ontario has a reputation as one of the safest jurisdictions in North America where professional boxing is concerned. As a result, there have been no mismatches or serious injuries in several years.

Minister, could you explain to my constituents, who are concerned about safety in sports, Ontario's role in maintaining high safety standards and how our government plans to ensure that the safety of Ontario's athletes are protected for the future?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Yes, safety in professional boxing in Ontario is a very important issue. The mandate of the Athletics Commissioner of Ontario is to ensure the health and safety of participants in this sport. That includes issuing licences to event promoters, who must supply proof that they've obtained public liability insurance, that there will be medical personnel on site etc.

The commissioner or his designated officials attend all professional boxing events in Ontario. If the commissioner or his officials find any breach of the Athletics Control Act at an event, the commissioner can charge the promoter, revoke a licence or shut down the professional event at any time.

I'm very proud of the fact that Ontario enjoys such a stellar safety record for pro sports, and we're working very hard to ensure that this record continues.

Mr Ouellette: I'm encouraged that Ontario has such stringent regulations in place to ensure the safety of our athletes. As you said, boxing is growing in popularity in Ontario. Since 1999, for instance, both Windsor and Rama casinos have held professional boxing events, and they've indicated that they would like to eventually hold one event per month.

Sports and the safety of our athletes are important to my constituents. This year the Ontario 2000 Summer Games will be held in the region of Durham, and this winter the Ontario Winter Games held in Sault Ste Marie

placed Ontario amateur boxers at centre stage. Minister, with the rising interest in sports in Ontario, and specifically boxing, could you tell the Legislature what our government is doing to meet the public demand for more boxing events?

Hon Mr Runciman: In addition to maintaining the strong regulations already in place, I'm looking forward to finding ways to bring more boxing events to Ontario.

Two distinguished Ontarians, Mr Ralph Lean and Mr Jim Hunt, have agreed to conduct a review of professional boxing in Ontario. They are volunteering their time. Regulations governing this sport have not been reviewed in over 17 years, and professional boxing has been relatively flat, averaging only four to five events per year over the past decade.

I've asked Mr Hunt and Mr Lean to consider all aspects of the sport in order to develop recommendations that will continue to ensure high levels of health and safety while enhancing activity opportunities in the province. I'm looking forward to receiving their recommendations this coming September. Their report will help to protect the well-being of our athletes in the sport of professional boxing in Ontario.

COURT DOCUMENTS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Attorney General: My question is with regard to your support for Bill 66, the proposal for public branding of judges. This is very typical of Tory politics: to exploit the real concerns of people about the safety of their communities with a by-election around the corner. Well, it's very crass politics, because while you're busy claiming to represent the interests of victims, as of March 17 courts across the province received a memo from your ministry saying that post-court dockets are to be sealed from the public. Do you understand what this means? These are the lists of the people who have been charged with offences. This identifies whether they've been acquitted or found guilty, the disposition. It identifies whether the matters have been adjourned. For time immemorial this information, this post-court docket has been a public document available to the public as well as the media. Now, suddenly, you slam the door shut.

Attorney General, you're trying to have it both ways. Tell the people of this province why you're denying them the right to see these lists.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the honourable member for the question. I believe what the member is referring to is the use of post-court dockets in Kingston. They are an internal administrative tool of the Ministry of the Attorney General that may not be a public document and they may be governed by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. So it is a privacy concern in compliance with the act that led to the discontinuance of access to that document called the post-court docket.

Having said that, the courts of the province of Ontario are open courts. Information on local court cases can be obtained by the media and the public from the publicly available official court records, and you and every other citizen of Ontario, as part of our democracy, are entitled to see those records.

Mr Kormos: Journalists and the public in Kingston and, I tell you, in other jurisdictions—because these same post-court documents are relied upon by journalists across the province to confirm the accuracy of the information they may glean from the process to ensure that the people they're identifying are accurately identified, to ensure that the record being kept by the court—because that's what it is, Attorney General. You know that. The court officer records the disposition, the adjournment date, the finding of guilt or innocence. They're being used by journalists to accurately present this information to the public. You want to have it both ways but you don't really want to protect the rights of victims.

You see, yesterday I was down in Wentworth-Burlington, and Jessica Brennan, the NDP candidate there, asked me to hold you accountable for your empty promises. Your Victims' Bill of Rights is nothing. It's a zero. It's not worth the paper it's written on. Your Premier promised in the last election that there would be a new bill—empty promises. And now we have this secrecy about court records.

You and the Premier are supporting Bill 66 while you block the public access to court records. That's shameful, Attorney General. Instead of singling out judges, why don't you reopen the door you slammed on the public and the media?

Hon Mr Flaherty: Ontario's court system belongs to the public. It's an open system. I'm sure the member opposite, as a lawyer who from time to time has practised in the courts, can verify that it is an open system. The court record, and let's be absolutely clear about that, is a publicly available record of documents filed in the course of a civil or criminal proceeding, and information on local court cases is available to every citizen in the province of Ontario. That's an important constitutional, democratic guarantee that has been there for hundreds of years, thank goodness, in Ontario. The openness of our courts is a hallmark of a democracy, which makes this democracy different from some other places in the world that, regrettably, don't have that democratic, open court system.

With respect to victims, \$1 million funding is confirmed in the budget for the permanent Office for Victims of Crime in Ontario, and 59 crown attorneys hired to provide the crown attorneys with an opportunity to interview victims in our court system.

1450

HOME CARE

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health. Community care access centres across the province are facing constantly

increasing needs for home care services. Hospital budgets are being squeezed, and people are being discharged from hospitals quicker and sicker. They need acute care. In fact, acute care has now become 50% of home nursing care. You promised long-term care beds, but they are not up and running. Elderly people who need long-term-care beds can be at home for a year or more before they get one.

The volunteer community boards that you have made responsible for dealing with all these needs have been telling you they just can't keep up with the demand. They have been telling you they need at least a 10% to 15% increase in their budgets. Yet there was nothing for community care anywhere in your budget.

How can you keep cutting hospital budgets, saying that home care is a better use of dollars, but shut out home care agencies from any new funding in this budget?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The member opposite knows full well that this government has made a tremendous commitment to long-term and community care. Our record is certainly one of the best in all Canada.

Our contribution to home care—we have expanded long-term community care funding by 49% since assuming office in 1995. In fact, we are the ones who introduced one-door access to community care throughout Ontario in order that clients and their families could know where they should go for the care and services they need. We're currently spending almost \$1.5 billion on home care and community services. I can assure the member that additional funding will be provided this year, as it has been each and every year since 1995 by this government.

Mrs McLeod: Your answer to the rising cost of home care has been to ration the number of hours of nursing care, personal care and homemaking care that any one person can receive. I know full well that your answer is to have people pay for home care themselves. That's how you are planning to keep your costs down. I know full well that you have actually given home care agencies less than nothing in this budget, because you have told the community care access centres that they have to cut back their budgets to last year's funding levels. There is no money in this budget to do what you have just said you intend to do. There is no money to continue funding the deficits the centres ran because they were just trying to keep up with the increased needs in their communities. That means that before this year is out, there will be more cuts to services and more rationing.

Minister, tell us openly and honestly today, since there is no new money but less money in this budget for home care, what new rationing scheme you are going to bring in as you starve the CCACs and force more and more cuts to home care?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The statements being made by the member are absolutely ridiculous. The member knows full well that this government has made a tremendous commitment to health care since 1995. This year we are spending \$22 billion. There is only one government, the

federal government, that has cut funding. We have lost \$1.7 billion. Where are you in helping Ontarians get back the money the federal government has taken away in order that we can further increase home care funding?

I repeat: We have increased home care funding in this province by 49%. I challenge you to ask the federal government to restore the funding to all health services.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Recently I met with several representatives from various industries in my riding, including printers, auto mechanics and tool and die makers. One of them, a tool and die maker, Pino Furfaro of R.W.D. Tool and Machine in Thornhill, has expressed concern about a shortage of skilled tradespeople.

In my riding of Thornhill, while we need workers trained in the high-tech sector, we also need people trained as industrial mechanics, carpenters and bricklayers. What is your ministry doing to address the shortages our province is facing in these trades?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): As the member has indicated, our province is facing trades shortages. These are good-paying, rewarding jobs, and I certainly would like to take the opportunity to encourage more of our young people to look at trades as a good way to earn a living.

Our government is addressing this problem, but we know there is still much more to be done. We have introduced the strategic skills initiative program, which partners with industry and the education sector to produce more skilled students. We have signed on to the redesigned immigrant investor program to encourage more foreign investors to invest in and immigrate to our great province. These are just some of the ways we are working to ensure that businesses have the skilled workforce they need to thrive and to help them create more jobs.

Mrs Molinari: I understand that a possible part of the solution to this problem could include immigration as a way of filling some shortages. If I'm not mistaken, the federal government has joint programs with other provinces to address immigration issues. Why is the government of Ontario not involved in the provincial nominee program?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): What's the answer to that? Come on. Good question, Tina.

Hon Mr Palladini: Obviously the Minister of Labour agrees with the question the member has asked.

We have worked successfully with the federal government to bring in workers on a temporary basis in some sectors. But the federal government's provincial nominee program is too slow and unresponsive to industry needs. Ontario will not implement an expensive government bureaucracy, as the federal government would like us to, that will only give limited results. We are going to continue to work to create a whole new way

to allow tooling and machining trades to enter the great province of Ontario, because we regard immigration as only a short-term solution to a long-term problem. We need to do more to encourage Ontario's youth to get excited about entering the skilled trades. Many successful business people got their start working in the trades. I'm one of them, and I'm very proud of that fact.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I come before you again with real concerns about access to justice at the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. I want to give you another example of how your processes fail tenants here in Toronto.

I have been contacted by a lawyer representing Mary McLroy. She was evicted from her apartment, and her belongings are locked inside. The landlord is supposed to provide 48 hours' access so she can remove her things. He refused. In fact, the landlord has demanded full payment of arrears to access her belongings. This is clearly illegal. Minister, the tribunal or your ministry should enforce any breaches or offences contained in your laws. The act states in section 200 that you as minister shall "investigate cases of alleged failure to comply with this act."

But when Ms McLroy's lawyer contacted Mr David Grech, a team leader at your investigations unit at the ministry, he was told there would be no involvement because an eviction had taken place. There was no longer a landlord and tenant arrangement, and thus they didn't feel it was their place to take any action.

Minister, there is no other agency—government, policing or otherwise—that claims to have or appears to have any statutory basis to enforce this provision besides your ministry. So confirm for me today whether or not your ministry is, as the act states, "responsible for enforcing all provisions of the Tenant Protection Act," and if they're not, tell me who is.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): The fact of the matter is, we have a specific tribunal arrangement in this province, which gets it out of the hands of politicians per se and into the hands of the tribunal. Frankly, tenants' rights cannot be extinguished, if they are unlawfully extinguished by the landlord. That is the law in Ontario, and it is a good law.

So I recommend to the honourable member's constituent that if there is a problem—if a right has been extinguished—there is a remedy under our system, and that can be pursued at the tribunal. That is the best advice I can give the honourable member. If there is a problem I can help with in some way, I'd be happy to pass it along to the tribunal.

1500

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Caplan: The minister's willingness to help is certainly good, but the tribunal says it's not their

problem; your own ministry says it's not their problem. You are not willing to enforce your own act.

Ms McIlroy's lawyer was told by your ministry to go to court. You've said in this House that the courts aren't the solution. But he did go to court and he filed a charge of extortion against the landlord, and that's when the landlord paid attention. He did allow access, but not 48 hours. In fact, some of her possessions were disposed of by the landlord; again, clearly illegal. So she's going to have to go to court again to charge theft against the landlord.

You claim that this is a fair process for tenants, but I don't see any fairness in the way that Ms McIlroy and other tenants are being treated by you, by your ministry or by your Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. Landlords can extort money, they can destroy possessions, and you're not willing to enforce your own laws.

Minister, who is going to protect the tenants of this province if it's not you, if it's not your ministry, as the law passed in this province says? Who are they supposed to turn to?

Hon Mr Clement: I don't know the particulars of the case, and perhaps the honourable member can enlighten me at a future date. But the honourable member is talking about things like extortion, and I can assure this chamber and the honourable member that if there is a problem that has a right under the Tenant Protection Act, then certainly the tribunal has jurisdiction to deal with the landlords in a way that is fair to the tenant. If there is a problem that is not before the Tenant Protection Act, if there is an illegal activity going on, by all means—extortion is not only a civil action; that is a criminal act. If the honourable member has information or knows someone who has information that would lead to a criminal charge, my best advice is to go to the police and to file particulars of the situation with the police. They are the best people to handle situations like this. That is my best advice.

AIR QUALITY

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. I am informed that you were in Windsor yesterday, and I happened to have the opportunity to discuss probably the greatest budget that was ever laid down in the province of Ontario with the good residents of Windsor-Essex yesterday.

However, upon driving into the municipality of Windsor, it did not take an environmental engineer to realize that the air quality in the Windsor-Detroit area certainly was not at its greatest. You could see the haze, Minister. Apparently, you were in Windsor discussing the new air quality initiatives which began on May 1. I'm told that up to 90% of the smog in Windsor is caused by transboundary emissions from the US. My riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Pardon for the interruption. There was a point of order. If we could stop the clock, please.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You may not have been able to hear the Premier accuse my colleague the member for Don Valley East of a criminal act, of concealing evidence. It seems that that is—

The Speaker: No, I didn't. I'm listening very carefully. We're getting down to the end of question period and I've listened very carefully. One of the problems is that when people do shout, you're listening to some people and you can't hear anybody else. I started off listening to the question so that there wasn't anything out of order when members shout across.

We are getting down to the end of question period; there's less than four minutes. I would expect all members to try and behave for the last four minutes, and I apologize to the member for the interruption.

Mr Beaubien: I'm sure, if the member from Windsor-St Clair was paying a little more attention, that some of his constituents are affected by the air quality in the Windsor area, as it affects my constituents in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Minister, as the summer heat begins to roll in, my constituents are becoming concerned about the quality of the air. What information can you provide them about the new initiatives, and where can they obtain this information?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I thank the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for his question. It is true that the quality of our air is indeed affected by the heat of the season.

Ontario's enhanced smog alert and air quality reporting program provides Ontarians with improved reporting through comprehensive and timely air quality readings. In fact, Ontarians can access up-to-date air quality reports publicly through our Web site at www.airqualityontario.com. I'm pleased to report that in the last week that Web site has had over 120,000 hits to it. Additionally, the people of Ontario can call us at 1-800-387-7768 to get up-to-date information on the air quality within their region of the province. The program also includes up to three days' notice if air quality is going to be poor. It also provides for direct e-mail smog alerts for anyone who subscribes to the e-mail network through that Web site I mentioned.

Mr Beaubien: It's good to see that constituents can have accurate information regarding monitoring. I'm sure the member across from Broadview-Greenwood, whatever they call your new riding now, will appreciate the rest of the question. My constituents would like to know: What are you doing to clean up the air? I know it's a tough question.

Hon Mr Newman: I'd like to respond to that question. We've done a great deal since we took office in 1995. In Ontario there was a huge deficit looming over the province. Unemployment was high. Among other things, air quality was left to slip through the cracks in our province. In 1996 the Provincial Auditor stated, "Many of the standards for air pollutants were developed over 20 years ago and are out of date."

Since our election in 1995, over 130 air quality standards have been or are currently being updated. This is very significant. In fact, this government takes the challenge of improving air quality very seriously. That's why we began with ourselves. In 1996, we made a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from government operations by 40%. To date, we've surpassed the 32% mark. We're waiting for last year's figures to come in. I know we will surpass that 40% figures.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Yesterday in the House you said you couldn't comment on the issue of legislated protection for the Oak Ridges moraine because part of the moraine is the subject of an Ontario Municipal Board hearing. Minister, I say to you, what a cop-out. Let me tell you why. Just last November you sent a letter to Mayor Mel Lastman asking Toronto city council to reduce its numbers, yet that very issue was the subject of a hearing at the OMB. Soon after that, you introduced the law that gave you the reduction that city hall and the OMB wouldn't give you. Why was it OK to both comment and legislate on a matter before the board last December, but now, when the Oak Ridges moraine is at stake, you won't?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): The issue at hand that the people actually care about is, how best can we balance the interests of development and growth and prosperity that we have in Ontario with the ecological foundations for present and future generations? That's the issue people care about, and the people have an answer to that. Our government has been grappling with growth and prosperity. Those are the issues. How to make sure Ontario has growth and prosperity for the future was not an issue that her government ever grappled with, because they were in the depths of a recession expanded created unnecessarily in this province because of their policies.

Those are the issues before us. I can tell you that on the part of our government, we think there is a way to do that. We are implementing the 1991 guidelines their government first sought to put on the public table. That is the purpose for which these rules are in place and the response to the Oak Ridges moraine in the hearing is in place. No further than that.

PETITIONS

STUDDed TIRES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to rescind the law banning the use of studded tires in Ontario.

"Whereas personal safety on winter roadways would be greatly increased; and

"Whereas improved technology on studded tires has proven in other countries and provinces they will not damage the roadways; and

"Whereas studded tires are used in most northern countries and all other provinces in Canada; and

"Whereas studies have proven that studded tires outperform all-seasonal and winter tires in manoeuvrability and braking on ice and snow-packed roads; and

"Whereas studded tires can save lives;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To rescind the law banning studded tires in Ontario and pass Bill 57 which would allow the use of studded tires."

I sign this petition as I am in complete agreement with it and give this to Philip Grandine, our page from Paris, Ontario.

1510

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): "Whereas Ontarians with a developmental disability are in growing danger of inadequate support because compensation to staff of not-for-profit agencies is, based on a recent survey, on average, 20% to 25% less than compensation for others doing the same work in provincial institutions or similar work in other settings;

"Whereas there are hundreds of senior parents in Ontario who saved the Ontario government millions of dollars by keeping their child with a developmental disability at home, and who are still caring for their adult child;

"Whereas there is no place for most of these adults with a developmental disability to go when the parents are no longer able to provide care;

"Whereas these parents live with constant anxiety and despair;

"Whereas these adult children will end up in Ontario nursing homes and hospitals if there is no appropriate place to provide care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To significantly increase compensation for workers in not-for-profit agencies so that it is comparable to the compensation of government-funded workers in identical or similar occupations; and

"To provide the resources necessary to give appropriate support to Ontarians with a developmental disability who at present have no place to go when their parents are no longer able to care for them."

I'm pleased to sign that petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I have a petition regarding health care.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Canada's health care system is one of our greatest achievements as a country;

"Whereas health care in Ontario has deteriorated, with medical services being reduced and hospital budgets cut to the bone, resulting in lengthy delays in treatment, with sometimes fatal results;

"Whereas major changes to health care legislation by the Harris government have been made with no prior public consultation;

"Whereas residents of Prince Edward-Hastings are demanding that their voices be heard and their concerns addressed to ensure that future health care legislation meets their needs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Harris government to protect our valued health care system and to hold public hearings on Bills 23 and 173."

I'm pleased to add my name to this petition.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition entitled Clear the Drivers' Test Backlog and it's signed by young people and students from towns like St Williams, Vittoria, Port Dover, Simcoe, Waterford, the Delhi area:

"Whereas the backlog for final road tests is unacceptable; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation is not able to get rid of the backlog, and most of the new examiners have been based in Toronto; and

"Whereas young and elderly people are often intimidated by the driver's test examiner and the finality of the test; and

"Whereas the driving tests have become very expensive and amount to little more than a money grab by the government;

"We, the undersigned, petition to the government of Ontario to continue to revamp the driver's test system and implement a better system to get these tests done in a timely manner that is less expensive."

I agree with these young people and hereby sign this petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

Once again, I share the concerns of my constituents and sign their petition in full agreement with their request.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have further petitions from CAW 222, signed by residents in the Oshawa area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances," known as carcinogens;

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to these carcinogens;

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances;

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer and that the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

I continue to support these petitioners.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to pass to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I affix my signature.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

Since we're all opposed to any type of health care apartheid, I affix my signature to this petition and ask Megan Kirkey from Englehart to present it to the desk.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition regarding the ongoing situation in Sarnia. These petitions in fact are signed by citizens in my area of Hamilton.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Sarnia is witnessing many women developing mesothelioma and asbestosis as a result of the asbestos brought home on their husbands' work clothing; and

"Whereas similar cases are occurring in other areas of the province;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to allow compensation for family members who develop occupational illness as a result of workplace toxins inadvertently brought home."

I add my name to this petition.

1520

HIGHWAY 407

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I am presenting a petition. I am very surprised looking at the names here. I have Troy Young, John Mutton and others who have signed this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario exempted Highway 407 east from a public hearing and then passed the Highway 407 Act to further exempt the proposed highway extension from important provincial environmental laws, such as the Ontario Water Resources Act, the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act and the fill regulations of the Conservation Authorities Act; and

"Whereas heavy equipment is now being used to clear the eastern path of the highway, without any environmental guidelines, control or monitoring;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario, as a matter of extreme urgency, to put in place such environmental monitoring procedures and controls as are necessary to prevent extreme degradation such as bulldozers working in stream beds, and numerous other environmentally destructive acts that have been witnessed since the 407 east extension was permitted to go ahead."

I'm pleased to present this petition to the House.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a further petition also related to the northern health travel grant from a group of constituents who are not in my riding but are in the riding of the leader of the third party. I am happy to present the petition on their behalf.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

This is signed by 25 constituents of Ignace, Ontario. I'm happy to affix my signature in agreement with their concerns and those of my own constituents.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to pass to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I sign this petition.

STUDDERED TIRES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I will not do the preamble, because we are running out of time, but it does say:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To rescind the law banning the use of studded tires in Ontario."

I thank Allan Clouthier and Pat Cormier from Sault Ste Marie for garnering these petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT
(CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY), 2000LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS
DE TRAVAIL (INDUSTRIE
DE LA CONSTRUCTION)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 8, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 69, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 in relation to the construction industry / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui a trait à l'industrie de la construction.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's a pleasure to be able to rise and speak on Bill 69, the Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2000.

This is certainly a bill that needs to be celebrated. When we can bring together the trade unions, the employers, the construction industry and the employees all to the table to agree, and bring this bill forward, I would think that members on all sides of this House would be cheering and clapping and celebrating for this kind of bill being brought forward, and particularly for the homebuyers. The homebuyers, especially new homebuyers, have been the ones who have suffered during the last few

years because of the type of legislation that was in this province, and Bill 69 is going to overcome those kinds of struggles, so I say it is indeed a time to celebrate.

Last evening we heard some of the members talking about putting a gun to the head. The only gun that I'm familiar with is called a strike gun, and that has been put to the head of employers and businesses for some time. I would like to read to you what came in from my riding. This is a man, Brad Willcocks, who owns the Best Western Cobourg Inn, and this is what he writes: "Our business was held in a seven-week strike in 1990 by the UFCW number 175. No strike vote was taken. Only 12 unionized staff affected 45 employees and almost bankrupted a family business. All staff were so upset by the experience that they decertified in 1994. Please continue to balance the field. It is not fair for a union business agent to look across the table and say, 'I'm going to bankrupt you,'" and that's what they almost did. That's the kind of legislation we've had in the past, and it's very wrong. That's just one example in my riding.

Strikes are so devastating to employees—members of the union, when I say "employees"—to employers, and often the only people who are going to gain from these strikes are the union brass themselves. They don't go back to the membership when they're out on the strike lines and ask: "What do you think? Is this the time we should change direction?" Oh no, they're trying to get another brownie point for their particular position in the union.

This bill has gone a long way to group the opportunity of lockout and strike within about a 45-day period, from May 1 to June 15. I think that as we look at this whole bill of improving and modernizing labour relations, it's long overdue. Some of the things that we've had in this province—think back to 1998, a five-month period where one trade union after another trade union would keep housing developments on hold. That's the kind of thing we do not need. Maybe a socialist government thinks that's wonderful; I don't know. I certainly don't and the people of my riding generally certainly do not think that kind of thing is in order. This is the kind of commitment we made in the throne speech. We're carrying through on it. Again, it's a promise made, a promise kept, consistent with the philosophy of this government.

We've been doing a lot to level the playing field between management and the unions. One has been between Ontario and Quebec. The bill we brought in, the Economic Development and Workplace Democracy Act, promoted job growth and increased workplace democracy, something that was sadly missing, that they could not have or would not guarantee a secret ballot to certify or to decertify. This was another step in the right direction.

1530

The current situation was a real disadvantage. It just has not been fair. Whether it's the employer or the employee, it certainly has been a real disadvantage. What we have here in a bill is a collaboration of both sides coming together and working for the benefit of all,

particularly the homebuyer and the people of the province of Ontario. This is indeed a bill that is realistic. It's going to be workable, and most of all, it's really going to fly because it's people co-operating and people working together.

For the homebuyers, can you imagine, back in 1998, five—

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Do we have a quorum?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Is there a quorum?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: I was commenting on the situation of a new homebuyer caught in a five-month rotating strike by the various trade unions. Can you just imagine how devastating? You've ended the lease in the apartment you're in or you've sold your old home and then, lo and behold, what are you going to do? This house isn't built. The bricks are not on it. The plaster isn't on the wall. All because of a strike because of greed out there. That's indeed a most unfortunate situation, and this will end that kind of circumstance. It costs so much to the homeowners, it costs so much to the employees and of course to the construction industry, and to the province of Ontario. Every time a new home is built, there are all kinds of other goods that are sold, various appliances and so on. It stimulates the economy so much.

Maybe the parties on the other side of the House don't appreciate the kind of stimulus that brings to this province, but it's indeed very, very important. I, for one, want to see the economy in Ontario rolling, and we're seeing it in my riding. We're seeing it in communities like Port Hope and Campbellford. We're seeing it in Warkworth. We're seeing it in Quinte West in particular in some of the things that are going on there with the newly amalgamated community.

This bill will ensure that in the future homebuyers have some idea of when that home will be completed for them, because it's important that they have that opportunity to plan ahead.

With this bill they've coordinated that all the collective agreements will expire on April 30, 2001. So there will be some coordination in the negotiations and then they will look at the specified time frame.

I know the opposition parties would disagree, but I have never been able to support the right to strike. It just upsets me to no end. This is a step in the right direction. It does allow a strike, but it limits it to a 45-day period. It limits any lockout to a 45-day period. So families of the employees who are working, members of a union, know that this isn't going to go on forever. What happens after June 15 is that then we start to look at unresolved disputes going for arbitration.

We have suffered too many crippling strikes in Ontario and I, for one, think it's time that those crippling strikes were brought to an end. Certainly this bill is going to be one step in the right direction of assisting with that, particularly when we have all the parties working together.

This is going to assist with bringing back competitiveness. We still would have collective bargaining. The kind of legislation we've had in the past has been totally non-responsive to that competitiveness, and because of that lack of responsiveness we've ended up with an awful lot of unionized workers without work. That's not fair to them, when they're required to belong to the union and then they can't get work because their company has to overprice in bids. It's been problematic in the past. This bill is going to help straighten that out.

This bill also gives some flexibility with the market conditions. They can come back to the arbitrator and identify the fact that they can't compete because of the high salaries. You know, it's better to get \$20 an hour than to get zero. Maybe it would be nice to have \$30. Or it would be nice to get \$15, but it's better to get \$10 than zero. That's what happens when companies can't compete.

So this is certainly going to promote construction and it's going to create jobs in Ontario. If there's ever been a jobs government, we have a jobs government. This flexibility that I referred to is certainly very, very key in this particular bill and is going to really assist as we move down the road. We've had four really good years, almost five years. We had five disastrous years in the beginning of the decade but we've had five pretty good ones. We want to keep that going. We're not just a government that comes in and stimulates the economy and then disappears. We want to see this going on for another decade or even longer.

I see that the changes in Bill 69, the amendments to the labour act, are certainly going to assist the construction industry. Protecting the residential construction industry will assist homebuyers and everybody down the road. Employees, employers and homebuyers are going to be the winners once this legislation gets passed.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Caplan: I'll be able to expand a little bit on my comments in just a minute, but it's very interesting that the member opposite talks about a negotiation bringing people together. What has become very clear is that this was a bit of a shotgun marriage. Mr Harris and the Minister of Labour held a gun to one of the parties' heads and said, "You will negotiate or we will do some pretty terrible things to you and to the labour laws in this province." That has really been the spirit and the modus operandi of the Harris government. In fact, I understand in the debate last night the parliamentary assistant confirmed that this was the kind of debate around—as I say, I'll expand on this a little bit later—subsection 1(4) of the Labour Relations Act.

My comment is that Liberals don't believe in that kind of an approach. We believe in a balanced approach to

government. The Harris government's approach has been to push through legislation, to limit debate. It has been neither fair nor balanced. I can tell you that the attack on working people in this province has really only just begun. Ontarians should expect a further weakening of basic worker protections such as workplace health and safety, hours of work, all of those kinds of things. Liberals have always supported collective bargaining. We're the only ones—sorry, we're not the only ones—who voted against the social contract legislation, as you well know. We've also opposed the various labour bills that have been brought forward by the Harris government which have tilted the balance. It's really a shame that the speaker would not comment on the way this particular deal was arranged, the way previous non-negotiations have gone, the weakening of worker protections and what the implications of that are for the people of Ontario and for the backbone of Ontario's industry, which is the construction sector.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Let me say to the member for Northumberland that I think that was one of the most insulting speeches I've ever heard anyone in here give. You talk about what goes on at a picket line. What would you know about what goes on at a picket line? I'll tell you something: If this government was one tenth as democratic as the labour movement, we'd have a government we could look up to, rather than one that people have to fear, which is the reality of what your Ontario is.

Let me tell you something else. When you say you still can't support the right to strike, you know, that happens to be one of the key foundations in the United Nations declaration of rights, and you've decided from your lofty position in life that ordinary people ought not have the right to withhold their labour. That's not a right you think they ought to have. You stand up and pronounce and pontificate about how you care about all these lofty ideals, and one of the key foundations of the rights of humanity that the United Nations has declared we should all have, you, with the wave of your hand, believe ought to be eliminated. It's disgraceful, absolutely disgraceful that in this day and age a member of any government in a democracy like ours would stand up and make those kinds of statements.

Then you have the nerve to say that we ought to celebrate that people were brought to the table. How do you celebrate when a gun is put to the head of the labour movement and they're told, "You reach an agreement that we, the government, can live with and the employers can live with or else we'll remove the key foundation in law that allows a modern-day union to exist"? That's a disgraceful performance by someone with your background, doctor. You ought to know better and I hope you take the two minutes to retract some of those insulting statements.

1540

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Our colleague opposite certainly continues on the path that if he has nothing to say he says it loudly.

I, instead, would say to my colleague from Northumberland that when we contrast the steps that our government has taken to build some sort of accommodation between all the players in the construction industry, we contrast that to the previous government, who decided that ripping up existing contracts should be the hallmark of their labour law. The member opposite ripped up the contracts of hundreds of thousands of Ontario workers, and he's comfortable with that.

This bill, as the member from Northumberland has very adequately described, will bring greater peace to the construction industry. The member opposite obviously doesn't think that having a regular and steady paycheque is something that the actual workers aspire to, never mind the employers. Labour stability benefits all the players involved. It also benefits the potential purchasers, whether it's home or commercial construction. The reality is that all those people were vexed by strikes, rotating strikes, one after another. The union bosses decided to pull the workers off the job sites, the union bosses, who never put their pay on the line, who never take any accountability, any responsibility for what they do to the economy in Ontario, the big union bosses to whom the NDP still pays homage. They don't care.

The people we're hoping to serve are the actual workers, the people who get the paycheques and the people who buy those homes. Those are the people this government cares about. Quite frankly, if it means that the union bosses are upset, I suspect that does more to reinforce our belief that this bill is heading on the right road than anything else the member could say.

The Acting Speaker: Further comments and questions? Response?

Mr Galt: I've been quite entertained by the responses. The member for Don Valley East talked about the shotgun marriage. Well, people getting together at the table—I'd hardly draw that as a shotgun marriage.

Then the member from Hamilton West: I consider it a compliment that he called my speech an insult, when it comes to his position and what I've heard from him in the past. I really feel honoured, because if he was on the same side as I'm on, I'd be upset and would be pretty nervous.

To listen to him, the garbage that was delivered in his two minutes, talking about—I think back to the social contract. As mentioned by the member for Scarborough East, it broke every—

The Acting Speaker: I ask you to withdraw the word "garbage."

Mr Galt: "Garbage" is an unparliamentary word?

The Acting Speaker: Just withdraw it. It's unparliamentary.

Mr Galt: OK. Recycled material, whatever.

The social contract wiped out every collective agreement in Ontario with any public group, absolutely each and every one. You just wiped it out like it was never there, and you're standing up criticizing a few comments that I made about the power of strikes, the power to bankrupt the family business. That's what you stand up

for? You think those are the rights that people should have, to go out and bankrupt companies, bankrupt family businesses, like Brad Willcocks in Cobourg? Is that the kind of power—you're upset because I defend somebody like that? I think you should be very ashamed of your comments and what you were delivering here this afternoon. With a wave of a hand—

Interjection.

Mr Galt: No, I'm not waving a hand. I just don't believe that you should have that kind of power, that any group of people should have that kind of power to bankrupt a company or a family business that has put millions into what they're trying to do.

Mr Christopherson: Your grandchildren will be really proud of this. You're a disgrace.

The Acting Speaker: I ask the member for Hamilton West to withdraw that last comment.

Mr Christopherson: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Caplan: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

It's certainly a great pleasure to debate Bill 69, the construction labour legislation. I wanted to first put some context to this debate and to what it's all about. I'm glad that the Minister of Labour is here, because I remember during his remarks he did the same; he talked about the context. But I'm going to perhaps shed a little bit of a different light on it.

Over the past five years the Harris government has introduced Bill 7, which was a repeal of NDP labour legislation, allowing the use of replacement workers. They brought in Bill 49, which brought changes to the Employment Standards Act, eroding minimum provisions for overtime pay, hours of work and many other working conditions for non-union employees. They brought in Bill 99, changes to the Workers' Compensation Board: They cut benefits to injured workers by 5% and gave employers a 5% premium cut. So injured worker benefits are now only partially indexed to inflation.

They brought in Bill 136, public sector union legislation which stripped away bargaining rights for health care sector workers. They brought in Bill 31 related to the construction trades, the so-called Wal-Mart bill, which eliminated protection for construction unions and made it more difficult for unions to certify. They brought in Bill 55, changes to the apprenticeship act which purported to lower standards for new apprentices, set new tuition fees and lower wages; wages firstly for apprentices, but then later on.

That's the context for this bill that has been introduced.

It was very interesting: I was rereading the comments of the minister earlier, and I'll quote from Hansard on May 1. He said he had been accused by members opposite of going to abolish section 1(4) of the Labour Relations Act: "You're going to abolish 1(4). You're going to allow for double-breasting. The sky is falling. Watch Ontario slip and Toronto slip into Lake Ontario."

The best they could come up with when we didn't abolish 1(4), when we brought in a recommendation endorsed by the union, was, 'They only did this because you held a gun to their heads.' That's bunk."

It was very interesting in the debate last night to hear the parliamentary assistant, Mr Gill, the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, speak to the effect that this was very much under discussion, that this was very much part of the context of negotiation, part of bringing the sectors together, saying that this was going to be implemented unless, of course, you agreed to something else. That's the context for the negotiation that took place which brought us to Bill 69.

Bringing a compromise under those circumstances is not real negotiation. That's not truth. This bill is not about achieving a balance. It was about threatening the workers with losing their most basic bargaining rights unless they agreed to measures which are going to reduce their wages. We often hear talk by members opposite about something they call "competitiveness," but it's just a candy-coated code word meaning lower wages. And this bill could result in workers from large urban centres being brought in to take the jobs of rural and local construction workers.

We, as Liberals, believe that there should be a balanced approach, not only to government but to labour legislation, and this legislation and this government have proven that they're neither fair nor balanced. The Harris government, Mr Harris, the Premier, and his Minister of Labour, have driven a wedge between labour and management that has put this province in the most precarious position we've ever been in.

We believe labour laws should be like collective agreements. Both sides should leave believing they achieved a balanced settlement. This sense of balance is the key to a competitive workplace. Bill 69 was achieved under this cloud; as I said earlier, it was a shotgun marriage with a gun being held to one of the party's heads and that's not proper negotiation for this or for any other matter.

I'm going to turn the floor over now to my colleague.

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I would like to take this opportunity to also speak on Bill 69, the construction labour legislation. This legislation is still another attack on local unions in the province, going back to Bill 7. This piece of legislation is another kick at the can.

1550

I have spoken to the construction workers in my riding and none of them seem to be too happy about the impending changes to the labour legislation. In an area like my riding, the legislation will serve to further depress the economy. While lately my riding has been able to attract some new business, in general it's not experiencing the luxury that many other areas of the province have and is not booming like other areas. If you're going to build a new school, we need local construction workers. We do not need the out-of-town contractors to have control of 76% of the jobs. In an area

like my riding, we need 100% of the jobs. In rural areas we need the jobs in the community.

Not too long ago, there was a large warehouse built in my riding. In the beginning, the electrical workers were contracting out electricians from the larger cities in the province. It wasn't until the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in our area stood up and formed a picket line that some local electricians were then hired. If this legislation passes, incidents like this will be more prevalent and small communities are going to be the ones that lose out.

The construction workers in my area are concerned about the threat that this piece of legislation poses to the wages of unionized workers. Not only will fewer jobs be left open to local workers but they may even be paid less.

Maybe someone can explain to my constituents the effect on economic growth in my riding if this legislation passes. In speaking to the construction workers in my area, it has become clear to me that they are worried that if they become more vocal—they are afraid the government will retaliate by revoking section 1(4) of the Ontario Labour Relations Act. Section 1(4) currently prevents double-breasting in the construction industry. If this section were revoked, it would certainly have an adverse effect on the lives of construction workers. Knowing the present Minister of Labour, I had hoped he had no plans to take this action.

I don't know how the government expects rural Ontario to grow and prosper if they keep cutting and enacting legislation resulting in dollars leaving rural Ontario. The government seems to have many problems. I've heard time and time again from my constituents that the only thing the government cares about is big business. People in rural Ontario are watching their hospitals close, their schools close. They are slowly losing everything that's unique and that they worked so hard for.

In this part of Ontario, the government has drastically cut the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the local ag offices and now they're on construction jobs. When will this stop? This piece of legislation is another example of the government trying to turn the lights out in rural Ontario. I am a firm believer that with what's happening in rural Ontario, they must listen to the voices of rural Ontario. That's the only way that Ontario will continue to prosper.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I want to make it quite clear that I'm opposed to this legislation and will be voting against it. This is a continuation of what has been an all-out attack on collective bargaining rights here in Ontario.

I come from down in Niagara. I know far too many of the very skilled, competent tradespeople down there, covering the complete gamut of trades. I know how hard they've worked over lifetimes. I know how hard they've worked to develop their particular craft and trade and how important they've been to the building of quality construction, not only in the Niagara region but across

the province, along with their sisters and brothers in every other part of Ontario.

I'm going to tell you this: I've had tradespeople from all sectors approach me over the course of weekends and other visits back to Niagara and I've had them, to the final one, tell me to say no to this legislation: the attack on hiring halls; the attack on seniority rights; what will be, as has been mentioned very effectively, the attack on older workers inherent in this legislation; the fact that when there's a construction project in Niagara, hopefully to help stimulate the Niagara economy suffering from a huge loss of industrial jobs since the Conservatives were elected in 1995, and enjoying only the most modest of jobettes or McJobs—those types of investments and those types of construction will no longer mean work for people from Niagara. It will no longer mean money into the Niagara economy, because it will let developers and big contractors—we're not talking little contractors, we're talking big contractors, the Tories' friends, the ones who gave them their wish list and who are getting it back in return. It will mean they will be bringing workers in from other parts of this jurisdiction, and people in Niagara will be denied the work that's rightly theirs.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): As I said last night and I want to rephrase again today, there was little, if any, debate within the community, I say to the member from Welland, that there was a problem in this industry. The problem was that unionized workers weren't getting work. They were being outbid on tenders, lower bids on tenders, by the non-union sector. I could point to study after study that everyone agrees with that will show that unionized construction workers and jobs in the province were decreasing steadily during the past 10 to 15 years. The unions accepted that as a problem; the employers accepted it as a problem.

I understand that in opposition your job is to oppose. I've been there myself and I was very vigorous in some of my opposition to my friends in the NDP who were in government at the time. But I would say to the members opposite, it may be one thing to be opposed to this piece of legislation, but considering the situation we found ourselves in and considering the situation the construction industry found itself in, what would your solution be if it wouldn't be this? Everyone agreed the status quo wasn't working. I'm not above any ideas that you want to submit to me.

I say to my friends Mr Kormos and Mr Marchese, if you have some idea—

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me. The member will refer to members by their ridings.

Hon Mr Stockwell: If you have any idea of what you could do to fix this bill by way of amendments or you have a plan that would tell me what you would do that would solve the problem, I'm open to those suggestions. That's why the gun wasn't held to the head. I'm open to suggestions. But all I've heard from the opposition is the damnation of this bill that's before us. Then you tell me, folks, what should be done to fix the problem, because

this is the best I could do. If you've got a better plan, just tell me.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'd like to thank the members for Don Valley East and Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh for their insight into the legislation.

Clearly, there has been lots of debate over the course of the last eight hours with regard to Bill 69, and members on this side of the House have offered several amendments with regard to this legislation: to name only a few that the two Liberal members addressed, the mobility issue and the naming issue. You know very well, Minister and members of the government side, that we've offered amendments over the debate period. We will be continuing to offer those amendments at clause-by-clause, and I'm sure that public hearings will bring the impetus to make some more amendments to this legislation.

The one area that I continue to be very concerned with in regard to this legislation is section 163.6. I believe that if the legislation is as strong as the minister says, then it should stand the test of time, if it passes. So I will be putting forth the amendment to get rid of section 163.6. The minister has given us on this side of the House his undertaking that he will consider this seriously. I would hope he would consider it more than seriously and get rid of 163.6. I believe it will stifle the construction industry because it is as if, if it's not a gun, it's an anvil over the head of the construction workers, saying, "If you don't play ball, we'll review it and we'll give it to you in 18 months," the way maybe somebody on the other side or general contractors wanted it to happen in the first place with the removal of subsection 1(4).

1600

I'm suggesting to the minister and the government members that we have, over the course of the debate here, offered several amendments. We will continue to offer those amendments and I would hope that the government would consider our amendments on the opposition side to be very serious and accept those amendments.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Just a few comments. The social contract is something that has come up, and I have to admit, if we don't take responsibility for some of the problems that happened under our governance, it's a problem. With respect to the social contract, in my view opening up contracts was an egregious problem committed by us; no doubt. Would that happen again under our watch? I don't think it would. If we're lucky we may not face a recession ever again while we're in power. But even if we were lucky again to be in power in a recession, I think we would do things differently—and Peter Kormos, the member from Niagara Centre, would do things differently as well, I suspect.

Mr Kormos: I'd vote against it again.

Mr Marchese: I'll tell you, we only have anywhere from—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Yes, I would.

Mr Marchese: Peter, would you mind? I've only got a minute. Please, go talk to the minister over there, because I've only got one minute. Honest to God, Speaker.

I've got one minute to say 30% to 34% of the workers are unionized—a small percentage, and it's diminishing. Yet this government wants to squeeze labour some more, right? That 30% to 34% of the workforce unionized is just too much, so they want to squeeze them a little bit each and every time.

The minister, of course, is doing his best to meet with the unions, he says, and he sincerely argues that, "Look, under these conditions, what could you do? I'm trying to help," as you squeeze them a little bit. The minister admits that wages will go down, but, says he: "Isn't it better to have a job? Yes, wages will go down, but it's better to have a job." That's why we complain about the McJobs. They're jobs, but people are getting, what, \$6.85, \$7 an hour? Can you make a living with that? No, you can't.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Caplan: It's tempting to ask the member for Niagara Centre to have a response to his colleague's comments, but I guess I'm just going to have to suffice.

I would like to thank the member for Niagara Centre, the Minister of Labour, the member for Sudbury and the member for Trinity-Spadina for their comments. I would say to the Minister of Labour that I do believe he is an honourable man. I do believe that when he gives us his undertaking that he will take the recommendations by the opposition and by others seriously, he will do so.

I want to make all members aware in regard to Bill 55, the apprenticeship and training legislation—that was a similar undertaking by an entirely different minister so I want to be clear. I made 28 separate recommendations which had support from the employers' side, from the union side, from just about everybody, and not one recommendation was supported by the government members.

I will hold back my scepticism, but I can tell you that if you base it on past practice, the Harris government does not listen. The Harris government has not shown any interest in working with members of the opposition to strengthen pieces of legislation, but if that is the offer, we'll certainly take them up on it. I can tell you that there is no such thing as achieving perfection in any piece of legislation; it can always be strengthened and improved. I know that my colleagues in committee and in clause-by-clause will be making solid proposals, will be suggesting to the government ways and means in which they can ensure that we do have a fair and balanced approach to labour legislation and other legislation in this province. That's what we believe in and that's what we will always stand for.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): I am pleased to be able to speak in the House today on Bill 69. This is another of the promises kept by our government. Following the week of the budget, the people of Ontario have come to expect us to keep our promises and, I think,

are very pleased when we keep our promises, balance our budgets and follow priority spending programs as they have indicated they want us to do.

I refer to the throne speech that was presented in the Legislature: "Your government acknowledges the need to improve and modernize labour relations in the construction industry across the province." This legislation has been considered for some time and has been brought forward by the Minister of Labour in response to needs that were expressed throughout Ontario.

This is a very important bill, because it speaks to issues that are creating difficulties in a \$26-billion industry. Obviously Ontario is booming. We're doing very well, and we're very pleased with the success achieved so far. But we quite recognize that there is a great deal more to do, and that is what has generated this bill. There have been difficulties in the construction industry, and the Ministry of Labour is responding.

The title of this bill is An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 in relation to the construction industry. When I first looked at the title of this bill, I thought something had been misprinted on the bill, because normally we have very interesting titles to our bills and we spend a great deal of time thinking about what we say. So I asked the Minister of Labour if an error had been made or if a word was missing. This is the minister's first bill in the House, and I think he may have been shy. He did indicate to me that a second title was considered, and it was the construction help residential, industrial/commercial solution act, which of course is an acronym for Chris. I'm disappointed that this minister, one of our more colourful and witty ministers, missed an opportunity like this. At any rate, I am very pleased to support the bill he has in the House.

I will not for a moment pretend I am an expert in labour relations. I have on occasion spoken to various constituents who have brought forward labour issues and have asked me to express those issues to the minister. I have done so diligently, and for the most part they have been very pleased with the responses they have received. But there has been an underlying concern that some very serious issues needed to be addressed, and, as near as I can understand, those are being addressed in this bill.

The opposition seems to think that for some reason or other we haven't appropriately or adequately consulted on finding solutions for both the workers and the employers. As a member who is not schooled in labour relations, what I have come to learn as a member of this government is that if you bring labour legislation to this Legislature and one group or another is not particularly happy with it, we are certainly going to hear about it. On more than one occasion, we have had great upsets over labour legislation that has been presented in this Legislature. Having said that, I have been very pleased with the legislation we have brought forward, but it has not always been easy.

When this legislation was being prepared, the minister, to his credit, spent a great deal of time talking to us about it in caucus. We had an opportunity to discuss it

with our own constituents back home. When it was finally introduced in the House, I was very curious to see what the headlines would read and what various critics would say about the bill, and it was very quiet. The headlines, for the most part, were minimal and, what there were, was for the most part positive.

One that particularly struck me was in the Toronto Star on Saturday, April 29. The Toronto Star is not always our most supportive newspaper in Ontario, but the headline jumped right out at me. It was in the home-builders' section. Although I am not in the market for a home, I often scan that section because we have a number of Guelph builders who often advertise in the Toronto papers, and I like to keep up on how things are going. The headline was "Deal Brings Labour Peace to Industry," and the subtitle, "Come next spring, there will be no 'stacking' of strikes that could paralyze the residential construction industry for months." So I read down further:

"Future new homebuyers got great news this week with the introduction by Labour Minister Chris Stockwell of long-overdue reforms to the collective bargaining rules in the residential construction sector.

"When the legislation is passed, expected later this spring, the package of amendments to the Labour Relations Act introduced on Tuesday will bring greater stability to the collective bargaining process."

1610

The article goes on to talk about the specifics about the bill itself. What I found most interesting was the last section. I will quote a portion of that:

"During 1998, the unionized residential construction industry in greater Toronto experienced no less than six strikes with at least one trade on strike at any given time between May 1 and September 14—almost 20 weeks.

"Consequently, in 1998 the construction industry lost the bulk of its 'good weather' building season. It took many builders months to catch up on the backlog and created havoc for those waiting for delivery of their new homes.

"This type of devastation to greater Toronto residential construction industry in the GTA would not happen again under the proposed amendments to the Labour Relations Act introduced....

"The most fascinating part of this story is that virtually every detail of the legislation the minister brought forward was the product of an 18-month process that included some intense provincially facilitated negotiations among the residential construction unions, various contractors associations, the Toronto Residential Construction Labour Bureau (negotiating body for the unionized low-rise builders), the Metro Toronto Apartment Builders Association (negotiating body for the unionized high-rise builders) and the Greater Toronto Home-builders' Association.

"Much of the credit goes to Stockwell, who as labour minister put all the parties together in one room, provided his top mediators, and gave the direction to work things out.

"The common ground from the outset was that all parties recognized the need for reform in terms of providing a climate within which new homebuyers could have confidence that their new home would be delivered on time as per contract.

"The fact that this is an industry-driven solution reflects well on all parties and bodes well in terms of speedy passage through the Legislature."

That remains to be seen, based on what we're hearing from across the way.

"It truly is remarkable that various employer groups and the unions were able to achieve general consensus on a workable solution to a very difficult problem that has plagued the residential construction sector for decades!"

I'll skip down a little further.

"While the proposed labour reforms apply only to the next round of bargaining in 2001, if they prove to be successful, they will form the basis ... of the collective bargaining process in the residential construction industry.

"... one of the greatest obstacles to the residential construction industry's ability to deliver new homes on schedule has just been eliminated and hopefully for good."

What I am reading in this article is that this person has recognized that a tremendous amount of consultation has been ongoing. He has recognized there has been a need for this for some time. He is indicating that he is hopeful this solution is going to work.

What I know, as the representative in my riding, is that I have seen many families whose husbands for the most part have been subcontractors and have gone through very difficult building seasons when their husbands have not been able to get work.

Colleagues across the way had an exchange a while back on whether or not it was appropriate to strike. What I know is appropriate is for negotiated solutions to be found if at all possible, to prevent strikes. That, to me, is good labour relations from both the workers' and from the employers' points of view.

It wasn't very long ago that a piece of paper crossed my desk. I wish I had kept it. It was a piece of marketing information that came from one of the unions. It talked about the pre-Davis era and the post-Davis era and changes that had been made by the Davis Conservative government that had irrevocably improved labour relations in Ontario. There was a big chart that indicated the number of strikes had gone way down.

What I'm thinking, as I look at this legislation and I hear the arguments back and forth and I hear my constituents speak to me, is that perhaps we're going to see from this piece of legislation another watershed that will be pre-Stockwell, that will be post-Stockwell. The bottom line is, this government wants good labour relationships. We want this construction industry to do well. We want every Ontarian, if they're in a union or not in a union, to have an opportunity to participate in Ontario's growing economy. We don't want roadblocks. We want homeowners, we want those who are investing

in large construction projects, to have the ability to complete their projects on time, to keep their word, to keep their contracts.

That frame of mind this is, I believe, what has brought this legislation to the fore. I am very pleased to add my support to this legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Comments or questions?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to rise for two minutes on behalf of my caucus. I think one of the interesting points to this debate has been what both opposition parties have claimed: that clearly this was not a level playing field or a level bargaining process with this bill. There was a gun held to the head of the unions who were told, "Look, you either compromise with us or we're going to blow your brains out." The minister has gone out of his way to say: "Look, this was never the issue. There was never a question of threatening or in a sense there was a never a question of saying to the unions, 'You either play ball with us under our rules or we're going to simply impose upon you a much harsher restriction.'"

I think the Minister of Labour will be interested in this and maybe he can respond to it, if I can read what was said yesterday by the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, who claimed during the debate that he was aware of the negotiations, that he had met with people. Again, I ask the Minister of Labour to listen to this and to respond to the comments made yesterday by his parliamentary assistant, because the minister has always claimed that there was never a threat here of abolishing 1(4) and there was never a threat here to the union; there was a never a gun held to their head. Let me read to the minister what was said yesterday by Mr Gill, the parliamentary assistant: "Yes, there was open discussion in the caucus: Should we abolish 1(4)? What should we do?" The parliamentary assistant, in Hansard, last night stated very clearly in the House that there was a caucus debate about abolishing 1(4).

We have always maintained on this side of the House that that was the threat that was held to the heads of the union to agree to this deal. I hope we clarify this. I don't know if the minister is right, I'm not sure if his parliamentary assistant is right, because clearly we now have totally opposite views here. We have the minister saying, "No, 1(4) was never on the table for debate to abolish." We have the parliamentary assistant quoted in Hansard yesterday—and I watched—saying the opposite. I look forward to the clarification here.

Mr Kormos: I should indicate that shortly, in some 20 minutes or so, Gilles Bisson, the member for Timmins-James Bay, is going to be speaking to this bill, providing very much a northern perspective, which is yet another perspective unique in itself and incredibly relevant.

Look, let's understand what happened. These are among the 3,000 people who laid out 700 bucks a pop to dine and wine with the Premier and Tom Long and Preston Manning and Stockwell Day and any number of Tory backbenchers and Tory cabinet ministers just last week—700 bucks a pop the day after the budget. It was

payback time. The corporate world, the big developers, big contractors, had to pay their dues, had to pay homage. They had to pay the price, write the cheque. We're not talking \$15 or \$100 cheques; we're talking \$500 and \$5,000 and \$10,000 cheques.

We're talking about some of the wealthiest, most powerful corporate people in this province who have this government in their back pocket. They went to this government with a wish list, with a shopping list, and this government came up with this attack on skilled, hard-working tradespeople here in Ontario, and quite frankly, down in Niagara Centre. Those are people for whom I have a great deal of time and to whom I am committed.

Too many people fought too hard in this province, across this country, to earn the right to strike, the right to withdraw their labour. The Tory backbenchers somehow seem to suggest that workers, any worker, tradespeople or others, strike lightly. Au contraire. What a stupid proposition. No worker likes to strike. It's only this government and their corporate buddies that forced workers into that unfortunate position, and now they want to take away that very fundamental right of working people to withdraw labour.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I want to set the record straight. The Minister of Labour went around the province. He had meetings with unions, he had meetings with employers, he had meetings with all the interest groups, and he was successful in striking a balance. He was successful in coming up with a deal. When he brought that to the caucus table, we discussed it, and we did discuss whether 1(4) was on the table. But the deal was already decided, so it was not on the table. Let me be clear on the record.

I was saying in our caucus we have open discussions, unlike in your caucus where you're being told exactly what to do. The same thing exactly on the police monument; you were not in agreement with that. As if this doom and gloom—the opposition keeps saying, "The sky is falling."

1620

Ladies and gentlemen, cranes are back all over Ontario, including my riding of Brampton and Mississauga—construction cranes—and cranes are going to be back in Toronto. There is a discussion again about high-rise building construction going on, after 10 to 15 years, and that is the beauty of our negotiations.

I met with the Premier of British Columbia, an NDP government. Do you know the growth they've had in British Columbia? Last year they had 20,000 jobs. Members, we had 200,000 jobs in Ontario, and those are the policies of the Mike Harris government that are bringing back the jobs. Jobs are good for all workers: construction workers and other workers. You might think it's not a good idea.

We talked about mobility. Every employer enjoys the right to hire the people he wants to hire. That's what we are offering the employers.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask every

person in the House today to join me in welcoming to the Legislature Mr Rick Johnson, regional councillor, city of Pickering, Durham region, who is also the chair of the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: That was the first good thing we've heard in this House all afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: That was not a point of order. Further debate?

Mr Bartolucci: I would like to offer a few comments with regard to the presentation by the member from Guelph-Wellington. That member indicates that this government wants to work in harmony with the labour movement. I think they should look at past practices before making such a statement, because it certainly wouldn't stand the test of time. Look at what you've done with Bill 7 and Bill 31: anything but working in harmony with unions.

I'm suggesting to you that if you're looking for the balance you want to strike, the worst way to get to that balance is by destroying the effectiveness of the Ontario Labour Relations Act. If there is one thing that is upsetting the union membership the most, most locals, and in fact a great many subcontractors, it's the fact that this government has chosen, with previous legislation and with this legislation, to destroy the balance that the Ontario Labour Relations Act provided.

The parliamentary assistant said the cranes are back. I want to invite him to northern Ontario. I want to invite him to eastern Ontario. You will see that with your mobility clause and with your naming clause, whether it's on purpose or inadvertently, you are punishing the locals, the tradespeople in every area except in district 8.

I would suggest that we need revision to the mobility issue. We need revision to the naming issue: 76% of the workforce is going to be picked by the contractor. I think that's wrong.

The Acting Speaker: Two-minute response, the member for Guelph-Wellington.

Mrs Elliott: I would like to thank my colleagues from Hamilton East, Niagara Centre, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale and from Sudbury for their comments.

It must be difficult to be a Liberal. I don't know how you do it. It seems to me that with Bill 40, at one point you were going to rescind that bill, and suddenly I'm hearing different messages; another classic Liberal flip-flop. I don't know how you know what side of the bed to get up on in the morning, to tell you the truth.

For my colleague from the NDP across the way, I have checked and I haven't received one letter from unions saying that this legislation is inappropriate, not one letter. Do you know what? When we introduce things that certain people aren't happy with, we generally hear about it fairly quickly and very vociferously. I checked with a number of my colleagues, and they too have not received one letter to say that this legislation is inappropriate or somehow isn't right on the mark—to the minister's credit. So I don't know who these people across the way are speaking for. Could it possibly be that

they're very concerned that the unions, which they've relied on for many years as supporters of their party, are actually co-operating with our government, that they've come to agree with us? We on this side of the House know that a lot of those union members not only voted for us but went out and actually worked for us on our campaigns. So their union bosses may be saying one thing, but on the ground those people know what a good Ontario is all about. They work hard and they do well and they know what makes a province tick.

I am very pleased to support this legislation. I think it provides flexibility. I think it's realistic. I think it's workable. Most importantly, it's come as a result of very solid consultations. The Toronto Star doesn't always support us, but when they say things like, with this labour reform, "one of the greatest obstacles ... to deliver new homes on schedule has just been eliminated and hopefully for good," you have to think we're doing something right.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I'd like to split my time with the member from Hamilton East.

I'm pleased to enter into this debate about Bill 69.

Mr Christopherson: Even my ego's not that big.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Oh, yeah? Sorry. My apologies to the member from Hamilton West.

I'd like to discuss some of the things that my constituents are saying from the trade unions and the workers, not only the heads of the unions, and why I won't be supporting this bill and why I hope that the minister and the government consider our amendments.

Mr Cleary: Did you split your time?

Mrs Bountrogianni: I did split my time, yes.

Mr Bisson: She did that at the beginning. Leave the woman alone.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Thank you, Gilles. Merci.

What they're telling me is that they had a choice of either going with this bill, which means a cut in their pay, or possibly not having a job. That was their choice. I come from Hamilton. There are a lot of workers in Hamilton, hard-working people who need their jobs and need the security of knowing they're going to have a job in order to pay their mortgage and enter into the economy, and this was a hard choice for them. They appreciated the difficult position that the Minister of Labour was in, they tell me, and they even begrudgingly liked the Minister of Labour, but they didn't appreciate the position they were put in.

They understand that the minister was pressured by cabinet, by caucus, by the general contractors, but they also have their own pressures, not only from their members but from their families and from a supposedly booming economy that they are trying to take part in. But they were confronted and, yes, they did feel that they had a gun to their head and they were in fear of the repealing of section 1(4), which would then decrease their security even more. I saw a particular fear in the constituents who were over 50 or over a certain age, where they felt that

their jobs would be at risk if they didn't compromise, and they see this as a compromise. However, they see it as a compromise that was not in their favour, and they resent this.

During the last three months we had a major challenge in Hamilton with our health care system, and through this fight I got to know many of the union employees. Local 794 of CUPE was one union that I gained a great deal of respect for. They were organized. They set their union colours aside in order to help their community. Mr Ron Poynter, the president of CUPE, wrote me a letter on this, and he had this to say:

"Working people look to and expect their unions to be a representative voice to protect them from exploitive employers and government whims. The proposal set out by the Harris government could harm the workers of Ontario and abandon them to the intimidation tactics of bad, anti-union employers. To pass legislation that would interfere with union organizing drives and assist employers in decertifying unions is not progressive labour law. Making people work longer and harder for less and less does not build a strong economy. Failing to protect workers' basic rights, like the right to join a union, is undemocratic."

One of the members opposite mentioned the pre-Davis and post-Davis eras. I really think we're comparing apples to oranges when we're comparing the Davis government with the Harris government. Although I also have a great deal of respect for the Minister of Labour, and he was in a tight position here, I think he squeezed the wrong people. He squeezed the people who drive the economy by working, by spending their paycheques, by being part of the economy.

I also don't think it's a coincidence that in the last five years the children of these workers have been affected. For example, our waiting list for counselling at the Hamilton public board has doubled over the five years of this government. These things are all related. Job security and being comfortable financially are related to raising kids and raising a family.

I therefore can't support this bill, and hope the government will consider the amendments we will put forward to make this at least a more livable bill for the workers in my riding and across Ontario.

1630

Mr Agostino: As was said before, this bill really is not about balance. It is not achieving equality. It is simply an attempt to drive down the wages of the construction industry, the trades industry, to benefit many friends of the government. The corporations that are involved would love this, of course, because it gives them an opportunity to pay their workers lower wages. If you think about the economic boom occurring across this country and across North America, you would hope that a government would try to encourage people to take part in it and to achieve the highest maximum wages, not the lowest common wages you can bring it to.

This bill really does that. It unilaterally reopens contracts, it interferes with the bargaining process and it

discriminates, as my colleague from Hamilton Mountain has said, particularly against older workers: people who have been in the industry for a while, people who simply may not be as quick as they were 20 or 25 years ago, people who have a great deal of experience and skill but who are lagging a little in some areas. You are now legitimizing this type of discrimination against these workers in the construction industry and in the trades across this province. This is about threatening workers with losing their most basic bargaining rights unless they agree to measures you have imposed upon them. In many cases it's going to result in workers from large urban centres being brought in to take the jobs of local rural construction workers. Clearly you can't negotiate with someone having a gun loaded pointed at your head and you being totally defenceless. This is what this was all about.

The unions know your track record. They know how you tend to bully, intimidate, beat up and go after people who disagree with you. You did it very effectively in the last term. You marginalized and punished organizations and individuals who dared oppose this government, using the force of government in a democratic society. They know what you are capable of doing. So to a great degree your track record of bullying and intimidation worked in this case. They knew what was on the line here. Many of the unions knew exactly what was at stake. What was at stake was either agreeing to this so-called compromise you have imposed or, worse, having you, on your own, eliminating subsection 1(4), as we have talked about in this House throughout this debate.

As I mentioned earlier in a two-minute response, up to last night this government—the minister, the parliamentary assistant and every other speaker—denied there was any real threat with 1(4), that that section of the bill was never on the line and was never up for debate or discussion. Then, in response to the speech by my colleague from Hamilton West last night, the parliamentary assistant, Mr Gill, said: "Yes, there was open discussion in the caucus: Should we abolish 1(4)? What should we do?" The silly argument that was given a few minutes ago was, "Well, this was only after we went out there." They want us to believe that the minister and the parliamentary assistant went out and consulted and talked to people, and this open discussion in caucus about abolishing 1(4) came after that. I find that incredible. That is not the way it operates. I believe the discussion was always part of the negotiation process with the labour unions in this province.

How you achieve balance and fairness by simply putting a gun to someone's head is beyond me. That is the sad part of all this. What is even sadder is that this government has now managed to bully and intimidate people who believe very much in fairness and in protecting their workers and the rights of their workers, but who also know this government is capable of doing much more damage than this bill can do.

Clearly they had to choose. They had to choose the damage you were going to impose upon them by

eliminating 1(4) or this compromise. Reluctantly, many of them chose this compromise, knowing the alternative would be much worse for workers. They know that this is going to hurt many of their workers. This is going to bring wages down in the industry. This is going to hurt workers who are a little older, as I said earlier.

What is really disturbing is that it's a continuation of a pattern, an attack on labour that you have prided yourself on in the last five years of office. The history is there in the bills you have brought in, the anti-labour legislation you have prided yourself in and have pounded out every time you go to \$5,000- or \$10,000-a-table dinners where the Premier gets up and talks about how we've beaten up on those unions and labour bosses and organized labour across this province.

This is another achievement you can go out and speak to your corporate buddies about at your Albany Club dinners or your \$10,000-a-table dinners. Unfortunately, you're hurting working men and women in this province. You're hurting an industry that is the heart and soul of our province, and you're hurting an industry that has carried this province, often in tough times. I think it is shameful and disgraceful. I really think that people are going to see through this, and this government is going to regret making these changes.

Mr Christopherson: With regard to the comments of my colleagues from Hamilton Mountain and Hamilton East, I think they have focused very effectively on the key issues at hand. I particularly want to underscore again the quote Dominic pointed out from Hansard. It happened last evening.

A lot of this is about whether or not the unions were threatened with the removal of 1(4). Section 1(4) of the Ontario Labour Relations Act frankly provides the security and legal foundation for construction trade unions to exist. So the removal of it was an extremely serious threat that labour leaders had to pay very close attention to, particularly when they looked at Alberta, where a similar clause was removed and construction workers are now earning 30%, 40% or 50% less than they were before.

The government argues: "No, we didn't threaten anyone. We wouldn't do that. This is all about the union knocking at the door saying: 'The Liberals wouldn't listen to us in terms of giving us what we wanted, and the NDP wouldn't listen to us in terms of giving us what we wanted. We're hoping you would. We want you to take away things that are in our contract. We want you to take away rights we have in the laws. We want you to do all of this. Please step in and do it.'" What nonsense.

Mr Gill, the parliamentary assistant to the minister, the third-ranking PA, said: "Yes, there was open discussion in the caucus: Should we abolish 1(4)?" How can you keep up this charade that the threat wasn't there? It was there and it was real.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): It's my pleasure to make some comments on this. I just want to—

Mr Bisson: Get a haircut.

Mr Spina: Sorry. I didn't have time to groom myself for the member from Timmins-James Bay, or is it Timiskaming-Cochrane?

Mr Bisson: Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Spina: I want to comment on the positive economic impact this bill can make. I have some numbers in construction based on just my area of Brampton, and wish all areas of our province could be as successful as this. For example, our total construction value for the year to date has gone up by \$113 million, a 47% increase since last year. Residential construction value went from \$53 million to \$64 million from February 1999 to February 2000, a 19.3% increase. Our commercial construction value went from \$1.5 billion to \$4.5 billion, a 202% increase. Our industrial construction value went from \$18.9 million to \$42 million, a 121.8% increase. These are phenomenal numbers that speak of the impact of a good, solid, sound construction industry, and that's what we've tried to do here: really allow the opportunity for those firms outside of the GTA which are unionized to be able to better compete for those contracts so that they can keep their workers employed.

1640

Mr Cleary: First of all, I'd like to congratulate the members from Hamilton Mountain and Hamilton East for their well thought-through speech. They laid on the line the way they feel about it, how it's going to affect Hamilton.

I know in eastern Ontario we have some similar problems. There seemed to be an internal problem in the government caucus, but the Minister of Labour is an honourable man and he'll try to sort it out and do what's best for the residents of Ontario.

In our part of Ontario the labour unions play a big role in the growth and all the projects in eastern Ontario. They're always working on fundraising and working for community projects—United Way and all the other issues.

I wouldn't want to see another issue in our part of Ontario like the Wal-Mart issue, where they had to put up almost a roadblock to be able to get the company that came in to listen to some of the workers in eastern Ontario. Through them standing firm, they were able to get a few of their employees work.

Our part of Ontario is not growing like lots of parts of Ontario, and I know that when we get jobs in eastern Ontario, contracts, we want all the jobs because that's the only way we can benefit.

I hope that all differences would be put aside and we would come up with something that was good for all the residents of Ontario. If we're going to get out of these problems, we all have to work together and put our differences aside.

Mr Bisson: In response to the comments made by both the Hamilton members, to the general extent of what they were saying, I agree. But really what this thing comes down to, and I thought the comments by Mr Spina were interesting—I forget the particular riding he's from: I don't have it in front of me. He talked about how we

need to make the contractors more competitive. This is what this is all about, is what the government tells us.

What's really interesting is when they talk about making a contractor competitive, how they get to do it. Do they talk about trying to provide the contractor with better management practices? Do they try to provide the contractor with supports about how to cut costs and how to become more efficient? No, they don't talk about any of that. That's not the direction this government is taking. The only way they know how to make them competitive is to drive the wage of the unionized employees down to the non-unionized standard. That's what this legislation is all about. It's pure and simple. If I'm an electrician or a mechanic, I'm part of an ICI agreement, an industrial-commercial agreement, or I'm part of the residential construction trades, my contractor is going to become more competitive by driving my wages down. This is what this legislation is all about.

I listened to the member from Cornwall talk about how we all have to work together. Listen, when it comes to this issue, there are two sides. Either you're the worker who wants to make a fair wage in order to be able to raise your family and dream the dreams that we all dream in regard to being able to live in this province, or you're on the side of the contractor who says, "I want more money, and I don't give a darn where I get it from, and if I'm going to get it from the workers, so be it." That's the side the government has chosen, and I think it's wrong. What they're doing by way of this legislation is diminishing the power that workers have through their collective agreements in order to negotiate fair collective agreements when it comes to how much money they get paid for their labour. That's what this legislation is all about. You only have to look at Alberta. The just effect of that legislation was a 30% reduction in wages.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Agostino: I want to thank my colleagues from Hamilton West, Brampton Centre, Stormont-Dundas-Chaltonenburgh and Timmins-James Bay for their responses.

What I find interesting is that the member from Brampton Centre, the parliamentary assistant, earlier spoke about the construction industry and the growth that's occurring, the jobs that are being created, the growth in the industry, new home building and so on and so forth. Let me remind you that all these things you talk about were there before the bill was passed. To somehow connect the two is beyond me.

We are benefiting from economic growth across the country. You can't have it both ways. You can't on one hand brag about how well things are going, and on the other hand say, "We need this bill because things are not going well enough." I find that somewhat of a contradiction.

I believe that if the government were serious about dealing with some of the issues in the construction labour area, then you should attack the health and safety. If you ask workers today in the construction industry, particularly unionized workers, what their major issues are,

they don't need this bill, they're not looking for this bill and they didn't want this bill. What they would like you to do is to help in the area of health and safety. They would like you to bring in tougher legislation to make sure that safety is followed, to make sure that for the people who are injured and killed on the job every day in Ontario there's greater protection.

It is a tragedy that this issue has not been addressed to a greater degree and that we have not done more in that area, because clearly, if there's one industry that over the years has had a disproportionate amount of death and injury as a result of the nature of the job, and often as a result of the sloppiness of the owners of those companies and the work that has gone on, it is in this field. If the government is serious about achieving the balance and equality they talk about, I would suggest you attack the area of health and safety, that you take more responsibility and more action in ensuring that workers who go to work in the morning in this area and in other areas of this province come home at night in one piece to look after their families.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: First of all, I want to say at the outset of this debate that I will not be supporting this legislation; I will be voting against it, pure and simple.

I understand what the leadership of the unions has done here. They were afraid that if they didn't try to find some sort of compromise with the government, the government was going to bang them over the head by removing provisions in the current labour laws that would allow them to do what's called double-breasting. Quite frankly, what they've done here, in my view, is they have said to the trade union: "Which way do you want to be killed? Is it going to be poison or is it going to be a gun?" The union leaders were allowed to decide which way that was going to happen.

I want to speak to two parts of this bill. Although this bill does a number of things, I want to speak to two of them that concern the people in the construction industry in northern Ontario where I come from.

Let's get one thing straight. Why is it that workers choose to come together by way of forming a union and negotiating a collective agreement? Why do they want to do that? They want to do it primarily for two reasons. They want to do it to make sure they are able to protect themselves from unfair treatment by the employer: favouritism, always giving the same employees all the overtime, giving the same employees the choice jobs, giving the same employees all of the best advantages of that employer. One of the reasons members in the construction trades sign a union card is to get work practices that make sure there are rules that try to minimize the favouritism employers often show to particular employees, for all kinds of reasons. That's one of the reasons we sign a union card, to make sure we have some rules about how that kind of conduct happens.

The second reason we sign a union card is because we want to be paid a living wage for the work we do. What this legislation does is get rid of both of those

components. It attacks job security by way of what it does to the mobility rights in this legislation, and it also attacks the wages construction workers get within both the residential sector and the ICI sector of the construction trades, otherwise known as the industrial, commercial and institutional sector. Let me speak to those two points very quickly because I've only got some seven minutes to do it, according to the rules of the Legislature.

When it comes to the issue of wages, what this legislation does to the ICI sector, to the people who work in the construction trades in the industrial, commercial and institutional sector, is to say simply this, "If I'm a big contractor from Toronto and I want to go and bid on a job or jobs in London, Sudbury, Timmins or Thunder Bay, wherever it might be, I want to be able to set the playing field so that I am able to bid on a contract with a competitive advantage over the local competitors."

That's what this is all about. What it says is this: Currently there are agreements in place that are negotiated both by way of area and by way of the province with the various building trades. Let's say, for example, there's a construction job in Kapuskasing; they're building a new hospital. What this legislation does is allow the contractor from Toronto to say: "I want in the future, because I know this job is coming, to bid on that job. I'm going to go to the unions up in that area and I'm going to say, 'Let me negotiate an agreement with your unions that allows me to drop the wage so that I can compete with non-unionized contractors who may be bidding on this job.'"

1650

If the unions say within a 14-day period, "We're not interested in downwards negotiations on wages," or if they're holding fast trying to get the best deal from their members, by way of this legislation the contractor has the ability to say: "Well, 14 days have gone by. You, the unions, are not willing to drop the wages of the workers. You're unwilling to negotiate. You're being unreasonable. I'm off to arbitration and I'm going to allow the arbitrator to decide what a fair wage should be for the unionized contractors working for me when I go and successfully bid on the job in Kapuskasing to build that hospital."

What it basically does, and I'll just read from this section of the act—well, I won't. It's probably easier to just explain it what it does: The contractor goes off to arbitration with the union. The union puts its position before the arbitrator as to why it does not want to drop its union rate. The contractor says: "Here are the reasons I want to drop the rate. It's because I want to compete with a non-unionized contractor who's bidding on the same job." At the end of the day the arbitrator has to decide, by way of this legislation, which of those two positions clearly puts the contractor in a more competitive position with the non-unionized contractor.

Hello? Which side do you think he's going to rule on? If you're bidding against a non-unionized contractor, it's pretty darn sure the arbitrator's going to say, "The union

doesn't want to negotiate a downward agreement when it comes to the total hourly rate paid to the workers, but the contractor does, so therefore I'm ruling on the side of the contractor." Each and every time that's what's going to happen because of the way you've written the legislation.

The effect will be that those people who are working in the construction trades who are now in a unionized sector, either from the contractor's own employee group here in Toronto or by way of the local unions up in the Kapuskasing-Timmins area, are going to be in a position of having to work for less money if that Toronto contractor gets the job. That's what this is all about, the first part of it. It's about pushing down the wages of the employees.

I say to the government, shame. If the only way you know how to make these contractors more competitive is by dropping the wages of the employees, it really tells me what side of the road you're on. You're basically on the road of the big contractors.

The second thing, and the more sinister one for us in northern Ontario, is what it does to mobility rights. For example, when they built the Timmins and District Hospital in 1990 under the NDP government, when they went out to do that particular work, the current legislation provided that pretty well 99% of the workers who were working in the construction trades for the unionized contractors on that job had to come from the local unions; in other words, the catchment area of the locals. These were primarily people from the Timmins and district area. People may have come from Kapuskasing, Timmins, Iroquois Falls, Monteith, Matheson or Kirkland Lake, but they had to be members of that local union, and 99% of the people hired to work on that construction job that took some year and a half had to come from that agreement.

What this legislation does is say to the contractor, "You now have the right to bring in 40% of the workers from outside the local union where you're going to do business." The government nods its head and says, "That's a good thing." You tell that to the workers in Kapuskasing. You tell the workers in Timmins or Sudbury how good a deal that is, brother, because that ain't a good deal. With these contractors it's the same as with any business: You bring the people you know. If I've got a business and I'm hiring, who do I normally hire? I hire people I know who have a track record with me. I don't want to take a chance and hire people on the outside. That's the position of the contractors.

What you're doing is putting in jeopardy the jobs of the workers in the locals in northern Ontario and, I would argue, in places like Ottawa and in places outside of Toronto, to the detriment of those workers. That's what you're doing by way of this. I will argue that it will probably go beyond the 40%, because I suspect, the way this legislation is written, that the contractor will go to the job, will bid, will get the job. Let's say the contractor has got the job on the bid. He or she brings in their 40% of workers and says: "Mr Arbitrator, my Lord, I don't think I can be very competitive with those workers in

Kapuskasing or Timmins, because they don't have the expertise of my workers in Toronto. I want permission to bring more than 40%." I'll bet you a dollar to a doughnut, Mr Minister, that is exactly what's going to happen. We will come back into this House two years from now and I will bring you agreements that will show that more than 40% of outside contractors will be employees from outside of the area where they're going in to do work. That's what's going to end up happening.

When you look at how the arbitration position is written in this bill, it gives the arbitrator all kinds of ability. The thing that is very sinister about this is that it puts a whole bunch of power in the hands of the arbitrator. But get this: The Minister of Labour, the guy who supposedly everybody likes, has said basically that the arbitrator makes his or her decision and at the end of the day the arbitrator does not have to disclose to the parties the basis of the decision and why he or she has ruled in favour of the contractor. I would argue from there, does that mean to say we now have no more right of appeal?

Basically you have taken the entire collective agreement process—I think you've thrown it to hell in a hand-basket—and what we're going to see is what we're seeing in Alberta now, where construction trade workers will be working for less money than they are now.

We certainly know what side Mike Harris is on. A lot of trade union people went out and voted Conservative in the last election, and they now see their friends in government sticking it to them. I can't understand why they're doing it, because at the end of the day they're sticking it to the contracting people in this province, electricians, pipefitters and the rest. You can't cut it any other way. We know what side you're on.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm not really sure that you read the act very carefully, because you have obviously confused yourself. The problem you have is that the 40% mobility clause within the act is legislated. So in essence 40% of workers have a mobile employer, meaning the person in Windsor who wins a job in Timmins can bring 40% of the workers with him. That is part of the legislation. The arbitrator can't change that part of the legislation. It's the law. The law says you can only bring 40%. The only thing that could happen is that you could go down. If the person, for instance, has to billet 40% of the site and you've got 100 electricians, they probably won't bring 40 electricians with them, because the cost of billeting them for the period of construction would be so excessive it wouldn't be worthwhile. If you don't bring them, you can then name-hire in the hall the same number of people that are left over. So ultimately the worst that will happen is that 60% of any workers on the site will come from that region—the worst-case scenario or the region. The best-case scenario is that it can only go up from 60% of the site.

Mr Bisson: What spin.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It's no spin at all. It's the legislation.

Mr Bisson: They get 99% now.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You say you have 99% now. You know what you should do? The member opposite should read the ironworkers' collective agreement.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You're not listening. Read the collective agreement for the ironworkers. The ironworkers have this kind of mobility clause in there already. They already have this mobility clause and name-hiring clause. They can bring 100% of the workers. They always could bring 100% of the workers to Timmins.

There are a lot of collective agreements that have allowed this kind of provision. The restricted ones were the mechanical and electrical. Yes, they were very restrictive. They could only bring one employee with them. Those have been changed. But there are many collective agreements in this province negotiated by trade unions that allow greater mobility than this. So with great respect, you didn't read it very carefully, because that can't happen.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I am very happy this afternoon to share a few points around the mobility issue that has been raised by the member of the third party this afternoon. Certainly in my part of rural Ontario any construction of an industrial, commercial or institutional nature is very important to the communities in my riding, because there are not a lot of them. I have to say that in my part of Ontario there has not been the growth that there has been in other parts. So when there are sites of an industrial, commercial or institutional nature, certainly there is an expectation in the communities in my riding that local workers would benefit from that construction. I have had tradespeople come to me with their very serious concern that if there is a school or a hospital built in a community near my riding, it may not be the case that local tradespeople will have employment in those projects.

So I say to the members of the government that in certain parts of the province the mobility clause may not be an issue, but it is an issue in rural Ontario, where there has not been the same rate of growth in construction as there has been in other parts. So when there are the letting of some jobs—and 40% of the work could go to tradespeople from outside of our community, who don't shop there, raise their families there, have their kids go to school there, support the churches there, support the ball clubs there. That's what our tradespeople in our riding do, and I think all of those people should benefit.

1700

Mr Christopherson: I want to commend my colleague from Timmins-James Bay, who has spent decades of his working life with the electricians and understands this issue very clearly. I want to say, though, that I share his concern regarding what an arbitrator can or cannot do. I will say that just prior to the wrap-up of my colleague, I did go across the floor and have a quick chat with the Minister of Labour. We didn't get a chance to finish that discussion; it's sort of happening while I stand

here. I was making reference, in the bill on page 8, to 163.2(4), items 2 and 3—lengthy wording. These are things that an arbitrator can amend. One of them says, “Restrictions on an employer’s ability to select employees who are members of the affiliated bargaining agent.” The honourable minister advises me that on page 17, section—which, Chris?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Subsection 4.

Mr Christopherson: Subsection 4—and it’s very much done in legalese. I would just say this to the minister. It may be that paragraphs 1 through 5 in 163.2(4) are indeed safeguarded by the other clause, but not being a lawyer myself—and I know you aren’t, and neither is my colleague—maybe this is something that’ll be brought up at the hearings, where we can have labour lawyers come in and advise all of us. If that’s the case, fair enough, then we will withdraw that objection. But as it stands now, it’s at the very least a very legitimate concern we have, given the way the bill is worded.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Bisson: First of all, to the Minister of Labour, his argument was that at the very least we can expect in the labour market of Timmins-James Bay that 60% of the construction trades will be picked from that area. First of all, to the first point, we get more than that already. You’re saying it could only get better. Well, you’re making it worse to start with, and somehow or other you’re trying to make me believe that somehow this is going to be better at the end? Excuse me. As it stands now, they’ve got to come to our local hiring halls and they have to hire the majority of the workers through the local hiring halls in our area. That, in most cases, means better than—on most sites I go on, it’s about 99%, because under the current legislation a contractor coming from outside a jurisdiction is only able to bring very few people into the job site. What you’re doing now is saying that contractor can bring 40%.

My argument, and the critic for our party raised this about the legislation, is that as I read sections of the bill, you’re giving in one section the power to the arbitrator to make decisions on the percentage of workers that the contractor is bringing in. I say to the minister across the way that if it’s not your intent to see that happen, then I’d like to see that amended when we go into clause-by-clause or when we go into the committee stage. I want it clarified, because as I sit here and read the legislation—

Hon Mr Stockwell: It’s in the bill.

Mr Bisson: Listen, half of you guys over there wouldn’t even know how to read a bill if it fell on you, so don’t talk to me about reading bills. The point is, if the minister’s position is that your intent is not to make things worse, I ask that it be clarified by the committee process. We all know what happens once a bill leaves this place. The arbitrator, in the decision that he or she makes at the end, looks at the bill and says, “This section of the bill gives me the right to make this ruling, so therefore I’m going to make the ruling.” So I’m asking that you clarify it.

In the end, it’s still not a good bill and I will vote against it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Spina: I want to shift a little more to what I’d said earlier, talking about the economic impact of more housing construction. I was criticized earlier by the member for Hamilton East, who said that all of the success—the numbers I had quoted from Brampton about the construction growth and activity, the values that we had—was prior to the bill. I would like to remind the member for Hamilton East—I guess that’s Mr Agostino. You’re different, aren’t you, Mr Christopherson?

Mr Christopherson: I think I am.

Mr Spina: Thank you. We appreciate you, sir.

In any case, I just want to remind the members from Hamilton that in 1998, from May to September, there were five months of consecutive strikes in the Toronto area in the residential construction industry, and it caused a number of problems for an enormous number of people. One union would strike, and then they would come to their agreement. Then the next one would go and the next one would go. It ended up being a rotation so that virtually the whole summer was held up in terms of the construction of houses.

The impact, of course, was that we had new homebuyers who had financial burdens. They had relocation costs that were not planned for, houses were not ready when they were supposed to be, kids’ schooling was messed up—those kinds of things. With regard to the builders, they had roughly five or six months with virtually no money coming in in terms of revenue because the houses were not in a position to be closed, and of course that threw schedules off for other projects.

The reality is that when we’re in an area like the GTA, normally housing projects aren’t five or 10 or even 15 or 25 units. Normally they tend to be in the hundreds: 100 units, 500 units, 1,500 units. These are substantial housing projects when we’re down here.

I’ll get to outside of the area, but for the moment want to look at this issue. For the union workers, it was really good to negotiate a wage hike, but as they settled their respective contracts and others kept on striking one after the other, they essentially were unable to work and their wage hike was effectively zero. You got an increase of 5% or 8% or whatever the number was, but the problem was that if you ended up not being able to go back to work for two or three months, your raise was negated.

We had suppliers and manufacturers that couldn’t sell their products, of course, from drywallers to tinsmiths—furnaces, bricks, two-by-fours—roofing contractors and so forth. They couldn’t sell their products, couldn’t deliver their services, resulting in layoffs all the way around.

Furthermore, to the municipalities, we ended up with some severe economic impacts in some cases where subdivisions weren’t completed on time, tax bases were down, and costs had to be shifted to other taxpayers often at a time when we were in a transition period where the municipalities were in effect trying to look at where

they stood with regard to the changes of the uploaded and downloaded services.

The effect on this Ontario economy, particularly in southern Ontario, was quite massive and had a negative impact on growth and job creation. We were able to still maintain some degree of positiveness from the other sectors, but it really was negative on the construction industry. Industry and government determined together that this situation should not happen again. We needed stability, we needed predictability, so that the industry could continue to function properly.

1710

This bill is a solution that would reform some of the collective bargaining to minimize the risk of consecutive strikes. It only affects residential construction in the city of Toronto and the regional municipalities of Halton, Peel and York. The agreements for all the trades would expire at the same time, April 30, 2001. Negotiations for all the trades would take place concurrently. Normal collective bargaining procedures would remain. Everyone would be given notice to bargain, to commence bargaining, to apply for conciliation in the standard manner.

If an impasse is reached, a no-board obtained, then that could lead to a strike or lockout situation, but they would be limited to a specified time frame of May 1 to June 15 and no strikes after June 15, which is of course the height of construction, particularly the residential construction period. That's when the workers have the best opportunity to earn their income, because as we know, in many communities right across Ontario you have only a window of opportunity to get good construction wages. In Toronto and some of the more southern communities you might be able to stretch it to nine months, possibly 10. But in the northern communities—in Sudbury, in the Soo, where I'm from, and Timmins—the season is very limited and if you don't take that opportunity to do the construction, you may as well forget it because it's just too cold. The ground is frozen etc.

We wanted to talk for a moment about the mobility issue. My friend from Timmins—James Bay talked about the mobility factor, and he made a statement that said, "Bring the people you know." He referred to the fact that presumably the people in the local area are the ones you know. Well, I think you have to look at both sides of it. If you've got any construction project of any size, if you're going to one of the five major cities of northern Ontario—North Bay, Sudbury, the Soo, Thunder Bay, Timmins, and now the new city of Kenora under its amalgamation—there's no question that you might have a sufficient labour base to draw upon if you have a substantial industrial-commercial project or a substantial housing project to go on. If you don't have a sufficient labour base, particularly within the trades, the unionized pool they can draw upon, you now end up with a problem, because under the current legislation not only can you not draw from outside of that pool, you're not allowed to bring in other qualified workers from your

base source of business if you're a contractor from out of town.

This also allows a local contractor from Thunder Bay or from Sudbury, for example, who bids on a substantial project—and this may be that small contractor's opportunity to bid on a project that brings their company one notch higher so that they can be a little bit bigger business—the opportunity to bring workers in from other sources to help them deliver the service they were contracted for. And you know what? That increases the employment on a local basis—unionized or non-unionized. So that, for example, if your labour pool is limited to Sudbury and you're short 40 employees, this allows you the opportunity to draw from Blind River and from Sault Ste Marie and from North Bay or Kapuskasing or Chapleau, and that gives you the human resources—I have to be politically correct here—to do the job in a timely fashion so that you as a contractor can do what you are expected to do by contract. And most importantly, it opens a window for a greater employment opportunity in that local or that regional area. I think that's a very valid economic impact for each of those respective communities across Ontario.

In conclusion, this legislation has a lot of support from the unions that are involved. They favour the mobility factor. It gives them the flexibility and competitiveness that they want to be able to go after jobs beyond the current scope of legislation. That is essentially what we are trying to support.

I know my friends from northern Ontario are gearing up because they'd like to make some comments. We'll give them that opportunity.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Bartolucci: I'd like to respond to the member for Brampton Centre and suggest to him that although he grew up in Sault Ste Marie, he's been away too long. The construction industry has evolved over the last 20 years, and that window he talks about, that period of construction in northern Ontario, is much greater than he suggests it is. Because there is now something known as winter heat and protection, which allows our tradespeople to work.

I suggest, though, that he is right when he talks about a narrow window. The narrow window he talks about with this legislation becomes almost no window at all. What he is saying in effect is that this government doesn't really care about the 8.5% unemployment rate in Sudbury, the enormous unemployment rate throughout northeastern and northwestern Ontario, especially in the construction industry. The mobility issue he spoke about and was so high on is exactly what is going to do in the construction workers in Sudbury, Espanola and Sault Ste Marie, construction workers across northern Ontario and in eastern Ontario, in Hamilton and Windsor, in all parts of Ontario except District 8.

The opportunity for a contractor from out of my city to come into my city and bring 40% of the workforce with him is blatantly and patently wrong. It puts construction and tradespeople in our city and our region out of work. I

suggest to you that there is need for amendment of that section of the bill. We as the Liberal caucus will be putting forth those amendments, and we hope they will get serious consideration.

Mr Christopherson: I also want to comment on the remarks of the member for Brampton Centre. I concur with my colleague, the Liberal labour critic, when he talks about the fact that there are workers who are going to lose rights here. I take what the labour minister has said—and I've acknowledged that in my remarks over time as we've dealt with this—that for some unions this won't have an impact because their hiring hall practices and their provincial agreement is such that it may even be less than what's here. I accept that.

But I also know that there are major affiliates to the construction industry that are going to lose rights. They have chosen, through free collective bargaining, to make sure that that's a priority. If it weren't a priority for them, they would have negotiated it out or traded it off for something that was of greater priority. That's what happens at the bargaining table. But the member doesn't want to talk about the fact that there are workers in communities right now who will not get work they would have had prior to Bill 69 being passed.

The fact of the matter is that right now 76% of every work site can be name hired. That leaves 24%. As I raised with you earlier, with the exception of district 8, there are older workers in all parts of this province—in the north, the south, the centre and everywhere—who are going to be overlooked. People who have been active in the union as stewards and health and safety reps are not going to get chosen. What do you say to them while you're standing up beating your chest saying what a wonderful agreement this is? What do you say to older workers who aren't going to get work tomorrow that they had yesterday because of your law?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I think the member gave a very good speech, and a fair and balanced speech.

The point the member for Hamilton West is trying to make is somewhat moot because the fact is, the workers he speaks about aren't working, so if we stick with the status quo the member for Hamilton West wants, they have the right to not work. What kind of right is that? They're not winning the jobs. The union companies aren't winning the jobs, they are not winning the tenders, they are not getting work.

Mr Christopherson: You can't make that general statement across the board, Chris.

1720

Hon Mr Stockwell: I defend it right across the province. I've got study after study done by unions and companies showing union work is going down. So the argument is, we'll maintain the status quo because every person has the right not to work. That's the argument, that's what the status quo would mean, so the change is going to amend that.

Yes, you're right: They'll only get 60% of the people in the region who will be working on that site. You're right. But that's 60% more than were working the day

before, so how's that not beneficial? Why do you think the unions like it? Because it means more union dues, more workers, more opportunities, a chance to win tenders, to create jobs. That's why they like it.

I'm sorry; I don't buy the status quo. Yes, you had 100% of the workers, and 100% of nothing is nothing; 60% of the work site, when you've got 200 or 300 working, is a hell of a lot better than 100% of nothing.

As far as companies and who is working and who isn't, I say to the members opposite, I don't know a business in this province where the employer doesn't have the right to choose who works for them. I don't know an employer who doesn't get to go through an interview process and pick who works for them. What is more fundamentally fair and reasonable than saying, "You pay the bill; you pick the employee"?

Mrs Dombrowsky: It's important that the government understand that, certainly in my remarks, I don't believe I've ever been an advocate for the status quo. I think it's very important and I think we have an obligation, as representatives of the people, to ensure there is legislation that provides for opportunity and also provides for equity. That's what I'm hearing from my constituents.

I believe my colleague the member from Sudbury has presented before this House that while we understand there can always be improvements with regard to labour law, with this particular piece of legislation we believe there are parts of it that need some tinkering, that need some amendments, and that's what we are planning to present to this House. I do hope the members of the government respect that.

We want to provide 100% employment for the unionized workers of this province. We are hearing from our constituents their concerns and we are formulating amendments that we believe will address their concerns and will also improve the status quo.

For clarification and for the record, I think it's important that there is an understanding here that there is a will to work together, and we're bringing forward amendments that we believe will address those concerns. That would be a point of clarification that I think needed to be stated on the floor of the Legislature today.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Spina: I appreciate the comments from the other members.

I want to reiterate what the minister indicated, which is that 100% of nothing is nothing. The reality is that this province went through a period of deep recession through the early 1990s when there was legislation heavily in favour of the labour unions. Clearly, that was not the way to get this province out of the recession. We lagged behind the other nine provinces in economic recovery. They were moving ahead of us. They were gaining in economic influence and power and recovering from the recession far faster than the province of Ontario.

As we took office with our measures, with our economic decisions and with the government we brought to this province, clearly what happened was that we began

to quickly respond and recover in a very fast mode, in a very quick manner. The reality was that northern Ontario really had difficulty. We still had persistent rates of unemployment in Sault Ste Marie of 18% and 19%, and of 12% and 14% in Sudbury, and other areas of northern Ontario did not recover as quickly as the rest of the province. We're pleased that now we're coming along and the north is quickly beginning to catch up. But I think that if this legislation had been in place sooner, it would have allowed local companies to be able to compete for local contracts, to hire local people and to create more jobs for their local community.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): It appears that I will be the last member of our caucus who will have an opportunity to speak prior to second reading of this bill, so I want to reiterate a number of the concerns my colleagues have already expressed. I want to begin with the concern about how this bill got here and why the context in which this bill is presented gives us concerns about the content of the legislation.

Earlier this afternoon the member for Guelph suggested this was the result of a good, solid consultation process. I think this could only be described as the result of a good, solid consultation process if you were comparing it to the way all other labour legislation presented by the Mike Harris government has been presented: without any consultation at all, and without any kind of due process in terms of hearings and opportunity for people to make amendments to the bill. I think perhaps of Bill 31, the so-called Wal-Mart bill, which was rammed through with absolutely no hearings and no opportunity for amendments. No wonder people get very leery of the way in which labour legislation comes forward from the Mike Harris government.

In the case of this particular bill, one of the reasons for concern, as many of my colleagues have said, was that you can't have a good consultation process when the alternative presented to one side in the consultation is, "You either take this or you get the thing you dread the most," and of course the thing the labour unions dreaded the most was the double-breasting the contracting companies actually were trying to persuade this government to come forward with.

We know the companies are not happy with this bill. We know the private sector employers are not happy with this bill and we know they're going to continue to exert pressure on the Minister of Labour to bring forward something more extreme. No wonder the labour unions are in a position of having to say, "We certainly like this better than what we thought was coming down, what we were threatened with was going to come down and may still come down in the future." I don't consider that to be an environment for a good, solid consultation.

I come back, then, to the question, why is this bill here? I want to return to the beginning of our caucus's participation in this debate to quote from what our labour critic, the member for Sudbury, said: "It's hard to fathom the reasoning behind Bill 69 if you believe the gov-

ernment rhetoric when they say most of Ontario is enjoying an economic boom. Of course, we say that is thanks to a strong US economy that provides a good market for our exports. But productivity is up, profits are up, executive pay is up and the stock market is up. Yet workers' pay is going down, and the gap between the rich and the rest of us is growing. The truth is, there is absolutely no cause or justification for this government to attempt to slant Ontario labour laws in favour of big business or the major general contractors."

Surely the government is not suggesting that we're in the midst of, or about to enter, a recessionary period where we have to look at the suffering of the major contractors and respond to what they've been trying to get for years and years. That's not the environment we're in.

I think my colleague actually was very close to the truth when he prefaced his comments by saying maybe we should "forget for the moment that the Harris government may be perceived to be anti-labour just for the sake of being anti-labour." I think that's much closer to the truth of why this bill is here.

In the few moments I actually have to address some of the concerns with the bill, I don't particularly want to enter into an across-the-floor debate with the Minister of Labour. Perhaps it's just as well that he's left for the moment. I appreciate the fact that he's been a very activist minister in terms of his engaging other members in this debate on this bill. I think it's very appropriate and very important for the Minister of Labour to be so actively engaged in the presentation of this bill.

1730

When my labour critic, the member for Sudbury, tells us that I have a reason to be concerned, as a northern Ontario representative, with the impact of this bill on opportunities for work in my northern Ontario community, then I am going to be concerned. Whatever arguments the Minister of Labour may put forward, I don't need to take quarrel with him on the specifics of the bill. I'll leave that for my critic to do.

I want to take issue with the very patronizing comments of the member for Brampton Centre in seeming to want to address the concerns of northern Ontario. I would say to the member for Brampton Centre not just that we have an extended construction season, as our critic has already suggested, but that one of the problems we have in northern Ontario is that we cannot seem to break the mindset of southern Ontario, and particularly governments when they're allocating contracts, that we have contractors large enough to do significant construction jobs. We don't have construction companies that have all the numbers of people who will necessarily do all of the contracting jobs. Sometimes we appreciate it if job proposals can be broken into smaller components so that more than one contractor can bid on it. But we have enough contractors to take on the jobs. We have the expertise to do it. We have without any question at all enough trained, skilled labour to do any of the construction work that we should be fortunate enough to get in northern Ontario communities.

We don't need to have the expertise and the skills of southern Ontario workers brought into our communities in order to carry out major construction work. I find it really offensive that the member from Brampton Centre would suggest that that's a benefit in this bill, that 40% of the people who will work on construction projects in northern Ontario could be brought into our communities because we somehow don't have enough skilled labour. That is completely unfactual, and I want to put that to rest. There is no advantage to northern Ontario communities in having 40% of the workers being brought into our communities. That's one of the concerns we have with the bill.

We also have a very real concern, as my colleague has pointed out, with the key person—I think it's no longer key man, as we are in the year 2000—provisions of this legislation. I won't go into detail but will simply recognize that our concern is whether or not it is going to be increasingly possible, under this legislation that the government is bringing in, for companies to be set up which can use non-unionized workers and therefore pay people lower wages to carry out construction work.

I want to recognize that it's probably fair to say that the current Minister of Labour, who I think is perhaps more approachable than many ministers have been and is certainly prepared to sit down and argue the case for his particular bill, brings forward this bill in an unfortunate context of what is clearly an anti-labour bias on the part of his government. Whether he shares that bias or not is almost irrelevant to the fact that his government has clearly demonstrated its anti-labour bias over and over again, in Bill 7, in Bill 49, in Bill 99 when the cuts were made to the Workers' Compensation Board cutting benefits to injured workers by 5%. Bill 136 stripped away bargaining rights for health sector workers at a time when there was massive restructuring of our hospitals taking place. This government had virtually no interest in providing protection for the individuals who were going to be affected by that. Bill 31: the construction trades and the Wal-Mart bill, already a first step towards eliminating protection for construction unions. Bill 55, the apprenticeship laws: What's at the root of the change to the apprenticeship laws? It's the fact that you can charge tuition fees, for one thing—one of our concerns—but also that you could remove minimum wage guarantees for apprentices and therefore lower apprenticeship wages. I don't need to go into all of the details of the cuts to the Ministry of Labour itself to show this government's anti-labour bias—the 41% cut to the Ministry of Labour itself, the 24.5% ministry budget cut.

What I want to come back to in this last minute and a half is the question of where this government may go in the future. I think that's the note on which we need to end second reading debate, from our caucus's perspective. As my colleague for Sudbury said, we have a concern about the fact that there's a review clause built into this bill so that this sword of Damocles hangs over the heads of the construction unions, knowing that at some point in time in the not-too-distant future, the Minister of Labour may

well take the next giant step towards the double-breasting that he is hesitating to take right now.

My colleague has also pointed out that the entire industrial, commercial and institutional sector of construction trades is opened for review in 18 months. Where does the government go next? Is this the final compromise bill, or is this in fact the first step towards significantly more changes in labour legislation?

I have watched as this government has shown so little interest at what happens to individual workers as they pursue an ideological agenda which takes us increasingly towards privatization in many areas that are now publicly run. In every instance I have seen, the ideological march towards privatization is premised on making it easier for employers not only to take over businesses but to be able to operate their businesses at lower wages. I remember the first stripping of the OPSEU contract, when the government said it wanted maximum flexibility and did not have any concern for the affected individuals as it achieved that.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Christopherson: I want to commend the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan on her outline, given the limited time she had, of exactly what is taking place with this bill. I would add to that—and we are getting down to the last bit of second reading debate—that if you stand back and reflect, you would think, from our discussions here, that the unions are all on side with Bill 69 and that this is the absolute reflection of the deal that was hammered out. My understanding is that's not quite the case, that the issue of the 45-day strike time in residential—Minister, the labour leaders are still making noises out there that this is unacceptable.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Name names.

Mr Christopherson: How about the construction trades council? Pull up their Web site. It's their statement—at least I'm assuming that is where it's from. It was handed to me. If it's incorrect, then I do want to be corrected. But it has their logo at the bottom, construction trades council, and it says: "The residential provisions are unacceptable. The key element is the restriction of the right to strike to a time period from May 1 to June 15, 2001. If the parties have not settled by June 15, the strike must end and the agreement is sent to binding arbitration ... The current formula makes a mockery of the right to strike, as builders will merely schedule around the time period to weaken the impact of any possible strike action."

They also make the case that in subsection 163.2(2) you mention "a designated regional employers' organization." They don't know exactly what that is. Apparently, if you read—and I'm extrapolating from what's here—that was never discussed. They don't know what it is. It's an add-on, and what's missing is the word "significant" in clause 163.2(4)(b) in front of "competitive disadvantage." In terms of outlining the case, the word "significant" is missing and—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my duty, I suppose, to stand and reply on Bill 69, dealing with the construction industry. I want to read into the record and then note my concerns.

The purpose of "sections 150.1 and 150.2 of the act apply with respect to work in the residential sector of the construction industry in the city of Toronto and the regional municipalities of Halton, Peel and York." That's really the issue. It doesn't mention Durham. I have had some concerns brought to my attention, which I have also brought to the attention of the minister. From my understanding, he is quite willing to amend this legislation to include Durham, if it's the wish of both the union and the employers.

It says here: "Section 150.1 deems all collective agreements that are to expire before April 2004 and that apply to residential construction work to expire with respect to that work on April 30, 2001. It also provides that they are to expire every three years from that date with respect to residential construction." So they are three-year agreements.

There's another section here, "For the 2001 round of bargaining only, section 150.2 limits strikes and lockouts in the residential sector and provides for interest arbitration."

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If it's in that sector, if we have Toronto, and in Durham, which I represent—of course, I've spoken with the member from Whitby, Jim Flaherty, as well. I'm also going to put on the record here correspondence that I received May 5 from Brian Collins, the president of the Durham Region Home Builders' Association, raising concerns on this that Durham has been excluded. So, for the record, I'm putting this out today for the minister and expect he's prepared to amend the legislation to include Durham.

Mr Bartolucci: I'd like to thank the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan for her insight into the legislation, and certainly for her warnings to the government to be wary of the direction in which they are moving.

She mentioned the key-person provision. We feel that paragraph 126(3)1, which says, "The board shall not consider any relationship by way of blood, marriage or adoption between an individual having a direct or indirect involvement with one of the entities and an individual having a direct or indirect involvement with any of the other entities," to be very dangerous, because what happens here is that if you don't get 1(4) through the front door, you get rid of 1(4) through the back door. So we will be making amendments to that, because we have serious concerns with regard to that.

I would suggest, as she pointed out, that with our competitiveness definition, if it's the intent of the government to ensure that there is a minimal wage for construction workers, we lose out on so much that unions provide in the way of training and the health and safety of the industry. I would hope the government, and the minister in particular, pay special attention to the fact that unions from all trades make enormous contributions to

the province of Ontario, to the people of Ontario, with regard to health and safety, with regard to training and apprenticeship. It is something that must be addressed during our public hearings and hopefully at clause-by-clause with specific amendments.

We continue, of course, as the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan suggested, to be very concerned with section 163.6 and will be making the appropriate amendment to withdraw that section from the legislation.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Just a quick comment on the member for Hamilton West. The trade association, Mr Cartwright, signed the agreement. I don't know what he's doing sending that out. He agreed to it. All I can tell you is that he agreed to the deal. He was part of the negotiations. He sat in on every meeting. He said, yes, he's on.

Why we didn't put "significant" in is because we would have to define "significant." We couldn't define "significant" because it's a term that means different things to different people. So we just said "competitive disadvantage." It's fundamentally the same as "significant," except we'd have to define "significant." We couldn't legally find the words that would define "significant" that would be approved by everybody, so we said "competitive disadvantage." I went to the union meeting. I met with 100 of the union guys and told them that we weren't going to put "significant" in. They accepted the fact.

On the EBA, regional areas, the reason we put that in is because some areas don't have employer business associations, so if they don't have them, they wouldn't be able to file before the arbitrator. We said, "If you put something together, we can designate that as a regional authority so that you can make the application to the arbitrator." It was that simple. They understood that too. Maybe they don't understand the definition; I don't know. But that is an accepted way to approach it, because there are some areas that don't have employer associations, and if they didn't have an employer association, they couldn't negotiate with the union and file with the arbitrator. That's the only reason we put that in.

Last, for the member from Thunder Bay, I want to say this: We don't believe for a minute you don't have skilled workers there. We do. We understand the fact that there are very skilled workers all around this province. The rationale for 40% mobility was this. Employers said: "We can bid lower if we can ensure that part of that site is with people we know, skilled people we understand. We know their work abilities, their work ethic, how well they can do the job and how long it will take them." They said, "If we can get a core of people we can move around and bid work, we can bid lower, not by using fewer employees but by knowing the nature and the ability of the employees we move." That's why they're going to move 40% around. It's no reflection on the people who live in your region and their ability to do the job. It's only a reflection on the fact that they can potentially get the work.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mrs McLeod: I would just respond very quickly to the Minister of Labour that the contracting companies who are actually based in our home communities would say, "We can do the work and we can do it with workers from home," and that's really in the best interests of the economy of my community.

I just want to suggest to the Minister of Labour that, unfortunately, I think the tenor of labour relations in your government was set before you became minister. I think the tenor of labour relationships between the Harris government and labour was really set by the government's own actions and the way in which they dealt with their own employees in OPSEU, for example, when, as I was suggesting at the end of my comments, they sought maximum flexibility, and maximum flexibility at one point included not even providing bridging provisions for people who were within three years of being fully pensionable.

The tenor for labour relations for this government was continued in the home care sector when the government decided that it would set up a request-for-proposal system, which meant that all of the existing community providers had to make bids. They were making bids to the community care access centres at a time when there were very few dollars, when home care was being rationed, when there were far more service demands than could possibly be met with the dollars the government was providing. That meant that the request-for-proposal process was going to lead the people who were choosing the providers to choose providers who were going to have lower wages, who were going to employ part-time, casual staff, and who were going to provide lower benefits. That's the kind of tenor for labour relations that this government has set.

I think the tenor for labour relations was set by the government's own Red Tape Commission, which maybe the Minister of Labour would like to distance himself from point by point. But they recommended increasing the maximum workweek from 48 hours to 50 hours, eliminating permits for employers using extensive overtime, reducing requirements employers must meet in making severance payments when a plan of business is closed, making it harder to file a complaint under the Human Rights Commission, and eliminating pay equity for employers with less than 10 employees, again an area where the government has shown its leadership by not making pay equity payments to its own employees.

That's where labour relations is going. No wonder people are concerned about this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? No?

On May 1, Mr Stockwell moved second reading of Bill 69. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Call in the members.

I've received a letter pursuant to standing order 28. We will defer the Bill 69 vote until May 10, 2000, in the appropriate time in routine proceedings.

Orders of the day.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Considering the time, Mr Speaker, I would move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1748.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 9 May 2000

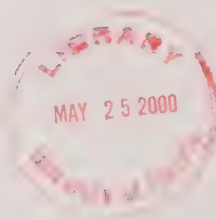
Mardi 9 mai 2000

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 9 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 9 mai 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAXPAYER DIVIDEND ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE VERSEMENT

D'UN DIVIDENDE AUX CONTRIBUABLES

Mr Young, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act to pay a dividend to Ontario taxpayers, cut taxes, create jobs and implement the Budget / Projet de loi 72, Loi visant à verser un dividende aux contribuables de l'Ontario, à réduire les impôts, à créer des emplois et à mettre en oeuvre le budget.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We are going to share our time, I believe. The member will be sharing with the members for Durham and Etobicoke North. And the liberals would like to defer their leadoff speaker, if that's OK. Unanimous consent?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I appreciate the opportunity of addressing this very important piece of legislation. It is indeed an honour to speak to this historic legislation that is in front of this assembly.

It is now a week since Minister Eves stood in this chamber and presented the budget, a budget that is worth talking about, that is worth reading and that is worthy of praise. In almost every respect, this is in fact a milestone budget for this province. It's a milestone in Ontario's history. Not only does it highlight our successes over the last five years; it sets out a framework for the future, a framework for continued success in this jurisdiction. That framework will keep us on track to build an Ontario with new opportunities and put Ontario in a strong position to meet the numerous challenges that face us in this new century.

I, for one, would like to take a moment to acknowledge the hard work of the members of my caucus, and particularly of those who were with us in the last session who are not here this session, for various reasons. There are a number of members, including my predecessor the former Attorney General Charles Harnick, who sacrificed a great deal to ensure that the financial and economic well-being of this province was restored, to ensure that this juggernaut we found ourselves facing, an economic

juggernaut heading towards the abyss, heading towards bankruptcy, was righted and turned around. Because of their hard work, because of the sacrifices made by those men and women before me, and by my caucus colleagues in this term, we have travelled a great distance.

In 1995 this province was on the verge of bankruptcy. Perhaps the most telling statistic of all is that we as a province were spending \$1 million more an hour than we were taking in. That's \$1 million more every hour than we were taking in in revenue. One does not need to be a mathematician to understand that is not sustainable. It is a formula that would end in fiscal disaster. As I will explain later in my address to you, Mr Speaker, and to this assembly this evening, unless you have a sound fiscal base, you cannot afford the social, health and educational infrastructure and services that are so important to Ontarians and that Ontarians deserve.

In order to understand how far we have travelled and how significant this budget is, it's important to recall where we were in 1995, before our government took office. Another very telling statistic is that the annual deficit stood in excess of \$11 billion. That was the budget that was tabled by Mr Rae's government just before he dropped the writ and called the election. Ontario was plagued by high unemployment at that time. It was commonplace for discussions around this province to talk about the number of thousand people less who were going to be employed at the conclusion of the year. Swollen welfare rolls were something we came to accept, albeit grudgingly on this side of the floor, as we did spiralling debt. Reluctantly, until that election in 1995, we had no alternative. Instead of leading Canada's economic recovery, Ontario was holding the country back. We were 10th of 10 provinces in terms of our economic growth.

Contrast that, if you will, with where we are as a province today. As the government over the past five years, we have cut taxes, we have begun to pay down the debt—and I'll have some further comments about that in a moment—and perhaps most importantly, over 700,000 Ontarians have a job now. There are 700,000 net new jobs, and those individuals didn't have jobs five short years ago. But we promised there would be exponential growth in the number of jobs in this province—net new jobs, primarily full-time jobs—and that's what we've delivered. We have helped almost half a million people break the cycle of dependency, the welfare cycle that so many of them thought they would never escape.

We did this all while protecting and strengthening our social infrastructure. In particular, spending on health care has never been greater than it is right now in this province, and we'll talk about that more in the next few moments.

When we took office in 1995, we did so after presenting a plan to the people of Ontario during the election campaign, a plan that included a promise, an undertaking, a commitment to the residents of this province that we would, over a five-year period, balance the provincial budget. Well, we've overachieved. The budget is balanced a year ahead of schedule. That's very significant. We've turned the corner. In fact, both last year's budget and this year's budget will be balanced. That's the first time in over 50 years. For anyone who is under 50 years of age, they have never experienced this before, and because of the unexpected but very welcome growth that we have experienced, because of the surplus that we experienced in 1999-2000, we were able to devote almost \$700 million to reducing our provincial debt.

But in keeping with the spirit of overachieving, we have amended our Blueprint promise, the promise we made to the people of this province. You will recall that when we campaigned this time last year, in 1999 for the June 3 election, we went to the people of this province and we set out in writing in very clear form that we were going to pay down at least \$2 billion of this province's debt. As I indicated a moment ago, we have overachieved. We have amended that commitment. Instead of committing to paying down the debt by \$2 billion over the remainder of this term, we have more than doubled that goal, and we have committed in this budget, I'm proud to say, that we will eliminate at least \$5 billion of the debt before the next election.

It's important to remember that not only did we balance the budget for this year and find that we had a balanced budget last year, we also in the fall passed the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget law. That will ensure that no Ontario government is ever able again to hike our taxes, to run deficits or return to the days of multiplying debts. That's another commitment that was set out very clearly in our Blueprint that I and my colleagues here campaigned on this time last year. We've passed that. That's now law.

But as you know, it was more than just debt and deficits that made the years between 1985 and 1995 what we call the lost decade. The absence of economic growth in this province deprived the taxpayers of this jurisdiction of a number of things. They were deprived of jobs, they were deprived of wealth and they were deprived of improvements to the social safety net. Only with a strong and growing economy can a province afford to have those things in place.

I must emphasize that it is the increased economic growth that has made it possible for our government to shore up those aspects of our social safety net. I'd like to share a quote with you if I may:

"My immediate priority is growth.... Liberals are committed to economic growth because we know that

economic policy is social policy Growth—growth which provides new jobs and new revenues—is the only fiscally responsible way that Ontario can meet the social imperatives of the coming decade."

David Peterson made those remarks in the late 1970s. Surprisingly, I agree with him. What isn't surprising, though, is that the Liberals since then have forgotten this and perhaps, with the greatest of respect, many of them may not have ever embraced or accepted it in the first place.

Let's talk about what we have done in the last year. Ontario's economy grew by 5.7% in 1999—real economic growth. I had occasion the day before yesterday to spend some time with John Clinkard, who is a very well respected economist in this province. I looked at him and said, "John, very impressive growth, do you not agree?" and he agreed. I said, "John, in your economic forecast did you anticipate this sort of growth?" He said that he had thought things would be good for this province, but he did not anticipate they would be that good. He attributes that exceptional growth to sound economic decisions made by this government over the last five years.

As we look ahead, Ontario's economy is expected to grow at 4.6% next year. Over the 1999 calendar year we created 198,000—almost 200,000—net new jobs in this province and almost all of them were full-time jobs. That capped five years of growth, totaling over 700,000 net new jobs since we took office. What does that mean? It means, first and foremost, that for those individuals who have the dignity of a job when they did not before, they have the means, the ability to not only believe in themselves but to supply their families with the necessities of life without looking to others.

That growth has also allowed us to balance the Ontario budget for two straight years, and that, as I said earlier, is the first time that's happened in about half a century. That growth has allowed us to begin to pay down this province's debt and, as I indicated earlier, to commit to even more money, \$5 billion worth of pay-down of that debt. That growth has allowed us to make a \$2.4-billion investment, both permanent and one-time funding, in health care: \$1 billion immediately out to hospitals, and I know the local hospital in Willowdale, the North York General, is one of the numerous recipients of those funds, \$1 billion out for capital—it's a one-time payout—and an annual increase of \$1.4 billion.

We'll talk about that because it's very interesting that that raises our annual spending on health care to an unprecedented level, a level never before approached in this province, and it's a level that is essentially at the point we committed to being at at the conclusion of our term, but here we are less than one year into the term and we're already prepared to revise our spending estimate upward.

That phenomenal growth that we are talking about this evening and the resulting benefits were spurred by tax cuts, spurred by putting money back into the hands of consumers, and really, who better than the people of

Ontario, the consumers, the hard-working men and women of this province, to decide how to spend their own money?

1900

We cut taxes on numerous occasions over the past five years in numerous ways—99 times, including a 30% reduction in the provincial share of personal taxes. We promised in this budget to cut taxes a further 67 times. So if this legislation passes, we will be at 166 tax cuts that will have been brought in since we took office.

The lowest provincial tax rate will be cut by 5% and the tax rate for middle-income earners will be reduced by 7.4%.

The retail sales tax that applies to vehicle insurance—because of course it is compulsory for each and every vehicle owner within this province to have insurance on their vehicle. The retail sales tax they will pay in relation to that obligatory measure of ensuring that they have automobile insurance was cut, effective this day last week, and it will continue to be cut by 1% a year until it is finally eliminated.

The capital gains inclusion rate will be cut by 66.66%, to 50%, over a four-year period.

Significantly, we have committed to fully indexing Ontario's personal income tax system to eliminate bracket creep. This will ensure that no Ontario taxpayer will pay more tax simply because their income increases to keep up with inflation.

Businesses large and small are under pressure to stay competitive in this province, as they are throughout the world in this global economy. They need to be taxed fairly. They need to be taxed reasonably. To that end, our government has committed to cutting both the general rate and the manufacturing and processing rate to 8% by 2005. When we accomplish that in 2005, we in Ontario will have the lowest corporate income tax rate in this country. I say to you, as did the Deputy Premier in this chamber last week, that we challenge the federal government to match those cuts, to make businesses more competitive, to allow them to grow, to attract them to this province.

Many individuals have also told us that when it comes to small businesses, they need even more help. They need more help to survive and they need more help to create jobs. We agree. That is why our government will also cut the small business tax rate to 4% by 2005, which will then, like the corporate tax rates that I talked about a moment ago, be the lowest in Canada.

As well, we will be expanding over the next five years the amount of income that is eligible for the lower small business corporate tax rate, to \$400,000 from its current out-of-date level of \$200,000. It's important to recall, as Judith Andrew reminded me the other day, that the \$200,000 threshold or cut-off has been in place for two decades. It's time it was changed, and we're pleased to be the government that brings in that change. When fully implemented, the income limit at which the small business rate would be phased out would be \$1 million. That gives small businesses enormous room to grow. We

estimate that 7,500 growing small businesses will benefit from this change.

Finally, the reason we are here this evening, our government intends to give every working man and woman in this province another tax cut, by way of a dividend, a dividend of up to \$200 for every Ontarian who paid personal income tax in 1999.

Taken together, our program of cutting taxes and reforming our tax system will lead to further growth in our economy, more money in the pockets of individual Ontarians and an opportunity for all of this province.

Contrast that with the record of our predecessors, the Liberals and the New Democrats, in that lost decade. By our account, during that 10-year period those parties raised taxes, while in government, about 65 times. Today's Liberals try to ignore the fact that they were so bad at managing the public purse in a boom time in this province that they had to raise taxes over and over and over again. And the NDP, who admittedly came into office at the beginning of a recession, taxed and spent, spent and taxed, taxed and spent, spent and taxed, until Ontario's economy ranked right at the bottom of this country—the weakest in all of Canada. I'm going to repeat it because it is troubling and it's important to remember just how far we had fallen: This province, under the leadership of the NDP, was spending \$1 million more every hour than it was bringing in.

I'd like to share with you some quotes that appeared around budget time when the NDP was in office: "Welcome to the worst of all worlds: record taxes, lingering recession, high unemployment." "Floyd Laughren taxed dirt yesterday, and he still couldn't balance the budget." How about this headline? It pretty much says it all: "Tax Massacre." Let's be clear. There is no justification for 65 tax increases over the space of 10 years, none whatsoever. There's no justification for the wastrel ways of the parties across the aisle.

The taxpayer dividend proposed by Minister Eves last week in this chamber would give every Ontarian who paid personal income tax last year up to \$200 of their own money. I want to stress this: It's their own money and we're giving it back to them. That is \$200 more to spend in their communities. That is \$200 more to donate to charities. That is \$200 more to invest or save if the individual so desires. But it's important to remember that it's \$200 to be disposed of as the individual taxpayer sees fit. I have confidence that all the people of this province have the wherewithal and the ability to make good decisions with their own money.

I'd like to share some quotes with you from last Friday that appeared in the local paper that is distributed throughout the riding of Willowdale, the North York Mirror. These quotes are perhaps more important than all the quotes that will be shared with you over the next number of days about this budget from the so-called experts. We'll do some of that as well. These quotes are from regular working people, hard-working Ontarians who, when asked what they're going to do with the \$200 dollars when it's returned to them, said the following: "I

am going to spend it on my nephew and get him some summer clothes." "My plan is to fix up the house." Michael Breen said, "I'll probably put it down on my debt."

Those are all good decisions. I've met some other people who said, "I'm going to donate it to a charity." They are entitled to do that. That's their way of directing money to their community. They'll also get a tax receipt should they so chose.

There's an old saying about government and taxes—well, maybe it isn't an old saying; maybe it's a new saying because this is unprecedented—"If you send it, they will spend it." That's the point. It has often been said in this chamber, far too often by some members across the way, that the government has no money of its own, it only has what the taxpayers send it. There's only one pocket. There's only one taxpayer. During the 10 years of Liberal and NDP rule, Ontario taxpayers were asked again and again to send more and more. Did Ontarians see benefit from these increased taxes? I have trouble finding words that will say this as emphatically as I desire: No, they did not derive any benefit from those increases of taxes, time and time again. No reform, no modernization of substance to our health care system took place before this government took office. There were no substantive improvements to our education system. There was not one long-term-care bed, not one.

1910

One need not be a demographer to understand that we in this province are going to face enormous challenges as the baby boomers age and become 65 and over. As the Minister of Health said in this chamber approximately two weeks ago, about 50 cents of every health care dollar today is spent on Ontarians who are 65 years of age and over. If you do the math—one need not have a degree in statistics to understand this—and you consider where we will be at when the baby boomers, that bulge in our demographics, come forward at 65 years of age or more, we have some enormous challenges.

One only hopes that the federal government will come forward and attempt to do their share in that regard, because they have clawed back billions of dollars in health care funding. I'm optimistic for one reason, and only one reason, and that's because we will be in the midst of a federal election shortly. Much the same as we got Harbourfront in this city decades ago, I anticipate that when it comes to dropping the writ, or perhaps a few months before, we will see the federal government opening up their pocketbook and restoring some of the funding they have cut back so that the people of this province can have the health care they need and deserve.

During that lost decade when the NDP and the Liberals governed this province, more people joined the welfare rolls. The statistics cannot be argued with. Economic growth basically stopped, came to a full stop. The principle is very simple, and I can't stress it enough: More growth equals more jobs; more jobs equals more wealth; and more wealth benefits everyone across this province. Tax cuts and more recently the rebate, the \$200

that most Ontarians will get back, mean growth. That means growth for this province.

I'd like to share a quote, if I may, Mr Speaker, a statement I'd like you to consider, as I would the other members of this chamber. It's made by Mike Chater, who is the president of the Historic Downtown Chatham Business Improvement Association. Here's what Mr Chater said after reviewing our budget: "When you consider \$200 times the population of Chatham-Kent, that represents a significant amount" of money. "And I'd say the majority of that money will be spent right in our own economy." I think he's right. Imagine the benefit, if you will, to communities of \$200 extra in the hands of every single taxpayer across this province.

Pat Crossman said the following: "We'll turn that around and spend that money on something family-related." That's what Pat Crossman said he was going to do with his \$200 rebate. He went on to say: "It's money we could spend and not save. It would go back into the economy." That's the point. That's the essence of not only the \$200; that's the essence of the principle that has motivated this government to cut taxes time and time again: more individuals spending more money, contributing to more growth in every community across this province.

We all know that the members across the way don't share our belief that taxpayers' money is their own and should be spent as they deem fit. Certainly not now that the election is over do we hear that sort of rhetoric from them. Indeed, I think that Mr McGuinty, the leader of the official opposition, characterized the \$200 as a bribe. I would ask Mr McGuinty, why? Why call it a bribe? I'm puzzled how returning money to taxpayers is tantamount to a bribe. If Mr McGuinty as the Leader of the Opposition doesn't have enough confidence in the people of this province, enough confidence to trust them to spend \$200, how could he possibly have their confidence to govern this jurisdiction?

What does the public think about that? Do they think it's a bribe? Do they think we're bribing them? The Toronto Sun of May 9, 2000, quoted Dave Pilniuk as saying the following: "The rebate comes as a welcome and unexpected ... surprise. I only hope it will be repeated as future government surpluses appear. That would let us decide where the money will go, instead of it disappearing down some needless politically correct black hole." He doesn't want it to be wasted away. How did he describe that \$200 rebate? He said it was "a wise move on the Tories' part." When the suggestion of it being a bribe was put to him, his answer was, "Hardly."

There are numerous other individuals across this province who have commented on the taxpayer dividend. I want to share a few of those comments in my remaining moments. "At the end of the day, I bet this budget is going to keep probably \$600 in my pocket." That is a calculation by this individual, Ken Sullivan, who was quoted in the Hamilton Spectator earlier this month. That is undoubtedly his calculation of the savings he will

derive from the \$200 we will be sending back to him and the tax cuts.

An analyst at Nesbitt Burns said the following: "Taxpayers will be given a rebate of up to \$200 on 1999 taxes, an almost unheard move by a Canadian government."

In the Ottawa Sun on May 3, 2000, there's a quote that reads as follows: "'Overall, I'm quite pleased,' said Joe Phillips, sales manager for Mark Anthony Brands winery. 'Finally government is starting to give back to the taxpayer. I think the middle class has been squeezed for a long time.'"

Tax cuts have also been the subject of a great deal of praise and dialogue over the past number of days, the seven days since Minister Eves stood in this chamber and read his budget. Let's consider what was said by Gerald Yaffe, a small business owner. He is quoted as saying the following: "We're overtaxed Small business is always looking for direct incentives. I think this budget covers all the bases."

Elyse Allan, who is the president and CEO of the Toronto Board of Trade, was quoted in the Toronto Star on May 3, 2000, as saying the following: "It's good to see they came out fairly aggressively" on corporate taxes.

Natasha Kong is the co-founder of an on-line women's magazine. She is quoted in the Globe and Mail. She comments upon this budget: "The cuts to capital gains taxes makes me feel like I made the right decision [staying here] in Ontario."

I know those on the other side of this chamber will feel an obligation to criticize one aspect or another of the budget. I appreciate that they believe that to be their role here and I guess that's accurate to a degree, but when they rise to enter this debate, as they will this evening and during the subsequent days, I hope they will remember what they said in writing. I hope they will remember the commitments they made to the people of this province. I hope they will acknowledge that many aspects of this budget are what the people wanted and what they promised they would do if they had the privilege to govern this province.

Let me share a couple of quotes with you. I want to be clear about this. I'm reading from the Ontario Liberal Plan—I guess it was called the red book euphemistically in 1995—during the election campaign. Just so we're clear, it is the policy document that was presented by the Ontario Liberal Party when they went out to the electorate in 1995. These are the promises they made. In fact, what I'm about to read to you in most instances is called a policy commitment. Let me read this to you, because I know you'll be interested in this. "Rising taxes also kill jobs. Paying higher taxes than their competitors is the last thing Ontario businesses can afford. As for Ontario families, many can't afford the taxes they're paying right now." Well, that was in their red book, so clearly they acknowledged at that time, and undoubtedly would today, that Ontario taxpayers need a break, and should undoubtedly applaud the fact that we are giving Ontario taxpayers a break.

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Let's talk about those policy commitments if I may in my remaining few moments. Again, I'm quoting because, Mr Speaker, as you may recall, this is in a separate portion of this document. There is a title saying "Policy Commitment," and underneath it says the following: "A Liberal government will repeal the 5% tax on auto insurance premiums." As you will recall, that's exactly what our budget is doing. It says very clearly that they're going to work to make auto insurance more affordable by doing so. Well, then, undoubtedly they will stand on their feet in due course and applaud this initiative, just as they will on other policy commitments that the Ontario Liberals set out in writing in 1995 for the people of this great province. They said, "A Liberal government will reduce the corporate tax rate for small businesses"—exactly what we've done, and "reduce the number of small businesses required to file for the corporate minimum tax." That's exactly what we've done.

On those notes, I will take my seat and look forward to hearing from some of my colleagues, including the member for Durham. I think he was going to speak to this matter. I'll also look forward to hearing from the members on the opposite side of this aisle, who undoubtedly will have some praise that they wish to share with us about this very important budget.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I will be sharing the rest of my time with the member from, I believe, Etobicoke North, or Halton, I guess. Anyway, if I don't have to be specific, I will be sharing my time with Halton, I believe.

I just want to start out picking up with the theme from the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, who started out saying, "Whose money is it anyway?" We have to get back to the fundamentals here and remind ourselves—I think the member said it in his remarks—that it's the government's job to apportion or redistribute the revenue it collects from the hard-working, taxpaying public.

Clearly, in the debate you're going to hear some differences in ideology and approach. Over the last 10 or 11 years we've seen the results of that difference. We saw the Liberal and NDP coalition, then the Liberal government and then the NDP government. I hate to repeat myself, but it is worth repeating: If you don't learn from history, you're doomed to repeat it. There's the 10-loss-years theory, and I suspect that some of that was difficult, but if you make a reference to—the member on the other side is barracking. If you look from 1995, the numbers have gone straight up. There are 702,000 net new jobs since 1995 and about 500,000 fewer people collecting welfare.

There will be people who argue that Ontario has recovered as a result of the activity in the United States, but clearly, if you look at the numbers and where the real revenue is coming from, it's from the sustained economy internally. All I can say to the member on the other side is that the government will stand on its record.

I go back to saying, "Whose money is it anyway?" There are letters in the paper; it looks like a letter-writing campaign. I see 18 or 20 letters a day in the *Toronto Star*, or the *Red Star*, as some people call it. I sort of say, well, it's a propaganda thing, but I do read them. I'd say that there are 18 different letters, 18 different suggestions, and really it's people saying that it's government. They're so used to big government making all the decisions. The ideology change here is that we're empowering people, individuals and families, to make decisions.

We've heard from the member from Willowdale in his remarks that each individual will make decisions. For some people that will mean buying something for members of the family. Perhaps Mother's Day will be a time to recognize the mothers or the families that are out there. It's people making decisions about people. Put a human face on it.

I want to move a little bit into the ideology argument, because that's really what we're trying to do here, to signal—if we look at this whole thing, it's called the Taxpayer Dividend Act. I have a copy of it here with me and I will make reference to it in the brief time that I have. Some members here, those who have been in government, think that government has all the good ideas. I think a government that listens is full of good ideas, because there may even be valid suggestions from the federal government; there may even be valid suggestions on the other side of the House; there are certainly valid suggestions from the people of Ontario, who really have had direct input into this process.

I was reading an article in response to the budget. This was in the *Globe and Mail* on May 8, so it's fairly relevant. This was written by a profound academic. I have a lot of respect for Professor Michael Bliss, a University of Toronto professor. He's trying to speak of this: "Pointing the Way: Liberal Choices for a new Canada." He may be articulating here philosophically at a federal level, but I really think there's a lesson to be learned here. I hate to say it—it's so ordinary—but a Liberal's a Liberal. You can't put spots on a leopard. Is it the leopard or—which one has the spots? Anyway, we won't get carried away on that, but I would say this:

"One pregnant question left by the article is the alternatives facing the Liberal Party as it tries to bridge the growing divide. Professor Bliss argues that the 'Old Canadians who control the Liberal Party are clinging timidly to the old ways.' One infers he means the Liberals will focus on building political strength in the old [eastern] Canada through deployment of the subsidies and patronage"—so true. There it is. Jane Stewart would certainly be the best, most recent example of blatant patronage. I think it was here too, at the time when they were the government for a few years and they were opportunistic there. They had the highest revenue and the highest expenditures in the province of Ontario. The article goes on: "... that he argues are fundamental to these regions' political cultures. Liberals would thus seek a third majority by ignoring the west, holding what they

can in Ontario and offsetting their losses in his new Canada with gains in Quebec and the Atlantic. Professor Bliss believes"—

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): You guys spend more than we did. Don't lie about it.

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me. The member for Ottawa Centre will withdraw that statement.

Mr Patten: I will withdraw that statement, reluctantly.

The Acting Speaker: Just withdraw the statement, please.

Mr Patten: I withdraw.

Mr O'Toole: The member for Ottawa Centre, in his disparaging remarks—it doesn't add anything to your knowledge base, Richard. I would say that respectfully.

The Acting Speaker: In the interests of not turning this into a personal thing tonight, I would ask you to please refer to the member by his riding, as opposed to his name.

Mr O'Toole: Ottawa Centre, yes; I'll remember that. Not that that matters.

But the thrust of this is that the Liberal theory, the Liberal ideology and the Liberal solution here is clearly as simple as tax and spend. There's an academic saying it, who has nothing to gain by tarnishing his academic perspective on the debate. I'll stand behind this as being well stated. I heard the member for Hamilton West in his narrow view of the world, struck with flashes of lightning in his brilliance, in his brief time in history. I have not yet heard him say anything that's beyond the ideology of rhetoric. In his case, he has basically already sold his vote. You've already sold your vote. Your free-enterprise spirit is as much evident as your comments here in the House.

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I would say, more important, that I am responding to the people I'm elected to represent. I can reply to the response I had to the \$200. I could show people that this is in Bill 72—it's in the early remarks; it's under section 7—and it states that it is a rebate to Ontario residents. It is a rebate. If you wonder where the rebate comes from, all you have to do is look at the budget numbers and you look back at 1999-2000. We had a far more aggressive recovery than was planned for and we had an actual surplus of \$654 million. That particular revenue piece has been given back to the taxpayers of Ontario.

I return to the argument about where the money comes from, and it isn't the government's money; it's the taxpayers' money. What we're trying to do here is send a signal—the dividend. If a company has a good year—and not that this is a private sector model, but certainly it sets a business plan. It stays the course. It provides a surplus or a stability that provides a surplus and then it returns that dividend. The government has created its own reserve fund, I believe, of \$1 billion that will oversee any difficult times that may or may not be on the horizon, but all the numbers look very encouraging. So the \$200 will go back to people who I think, from all the notes I have here and letters I've received, will make decisions that

affect more importantly their own lives, whether it's their children, their spouse or in making a decision. If you look at the multiplier effect of the \$200, clearly if you give someone some money, they're going to make a decision to make a purchase, perhaps larger than the dividend they're receiving.

I want to quote a couple of people here who have made comments. One was Adrian Foster, who made the comment here, "The provincial government's decision to follow its federal counterparts in returning to the index of income bracket, eliminating bracket creep, will mean taxpayers will get to keep more of the salaries they earn." I might add that Mr Foster is a financial planner, a small independently employed individual who knows the value of money. He knows what it means to earn his own bread.

We're all headed toward the top of the tax bracket. These are the people who will benefit. The mood was more optimistic than cynical over the government's decision to return the \$200 per person. Another comment was made that, "As it will probably be returned in the Christmas season, this will be well spent to help both retailers and families."

George Khouri from the board of trade stated that the community is made up of many small businesses, all of whom will see a net and direct benefit by individuals making decisions.

Another part isn't specifically the \$200, but it's part of the 67 tax cuts that were announced in the budget that was voted on yesterday. Arnold Bark, who has written to me, is an independently employed individual and he has made the definition that if he were to get for instance—"The retail sales tax reduction is a plus for those who operate vehicles in the course of their business." Also, the retail sales tax reduction on "auto maintenance will be well used toward maintaining vehicles in good working order."

There are many more points to be made, and I'm looking around and I don't see the member from Halton, so I'll just keep going until he returns.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: OK. In that case I will turn to the member from Etobicoke North, if the member from Etobicoke North would like to pick up.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I'd like to thank the member for Durham Centre for his eloquent remarks, contrasted to the bellow across the way. I think he's from Hamilton Centre.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): West.

Mr Hastings: West. I'll get my directions straight.

I think what we need to focus on in this particular presentation is the benefits of the dividend tax credit. I would like to start from a very practical, fundamental perspective of what the reaction is across the way contrasted to the reaction I'm getting in my own riding made up primarily of working-class folks who have a very challenging time in today's economy. A lot of these people are newcomers to the country. I've had several phone calls from people in the newcomer category, new

Canadians who have been here maybe five, eight, 10 years. Some of them are struggling to get new skills for the new economy. Some of them are still in school. Not one of those folks, and I've had two dozen calls minimum on this, has said: "This is a bad idea and we don't need the money. We don't like the money." This is the reaction from our folks across the way. They have a different philosophy of taxation, however, to us on the government side, particularly in the New Democratic Party, but also to a lesser extent with our federal gliberal opposition. I think they belong to and agree with adherence to the Al Gore school of taxation.

The Clinton-Gore administration has said over the last few years that giving people money that was theirs to start with—any tax relief, in fact, whether it's through general across-the-board tax reductions or, in this particular context, an actual tax rebate, an actual tax dividend based on your past year's income—is what the future president from the Democratic Party labels a "risky proposition." It's a very bad idea that people would have their own money, in this case \$200, to decide whether they want to pay down their debt, save it, donate it or spend it for some particular purpose related to themselves or their families or their children.

Across the way we have examples of the fundamental divide which says that keeping the money and having the state spend it, through a ministry or through a government or through some agency, is not a risky proposition. Are you telling me today that in an economy as complex as ours it's better to allow bureaucracies to determine how they're going to spend these \$200? I don't think so. I think I'd rather trust the individual, perhaps imperfect instincts of those citizens who want to spend that money, save it or do whatever they want. It's their decision.

For these folks across the way, and anybody in our society who doesn't like the idea of getting the \$200, they can immediately apply it to state purposes. They often talk about getting the overall debt down. Well, here is a practical, everyday example for the folks who don't want the ordinary citizen to have the \$200. There's a line on your federal income tax right near the end which says, "I want to have this \$200 go to the reduction of Ontario's debt." I don't hear them using that example, oh no. We have it that only the state could take that money and only the state could wisely spend it and there's no risk involved, whereas if a government of a Conservative stripe, small-c or large, provides a tax rebate, that's risky, that's not a good idea, which demonstrates the fundamental divide between us on the government side and those folks over there, which is essentially that it's a philosophy of collectivism. It's the lack of individual faith in people making their own decisions about the \$200.

In fact, it goes much further. We have heard through the last few years particularly from the official finance critic of the official opposition party, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, who has constantly reminded us, and I can remember back in 1995, 1996 and 1997 the refrain: "Where are the jobs? Where are the jobs?" We

don't hear that much any more. Why? Because tax reductions overall in any category lead to a prosperous economy. They create jobs. You'll say, "Well, where is the evidence the member for Scarborough-Agincourt brings up?" One of the best places of evidence—and particularly for his new hero, the economic spokesman for the Bank of Montreal who said that tax reductions have hardly any impact on a modern economy. All Mr O'Neill or any of his economic friends have to do is look around the city of Toronto or any of the regions and see the enormous growth in jobs in television productions, in films and now, through a new tax credit provided in the 2000 budget, in the new media. Prior to 1995, the film industry in the city of Toronto was a pretty pale imitation of what we have today. It was a struggling industry. Yes, there were some productions going on, but not nearly the numbers you see today. We have created thousands of jobs out of that particular tax credit, tax reduction.

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What else is there for proof? All you've got to do is talk to the Screen Actors Guild in Hollywood, to all the actor unions. Last summer and fall, these folks held very vigorous protests in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Sacramento, the state capital, and in Washington. They were arguing that they need a tax credit as much as the provinces in Canada or other US jurisdictions that offered a tax credit. Why? Because there is no doubt that there is a very organic connect between tax reductions overall, whether it be corporate, personal, through this dividend tax credit, or exemption—whatever you want to call it—or through a reduction in capital gains taxes.

Over the last two years, not one spokesman on the other side has come up with a case—and I'll be interested to hear the finance critic for the New Democrats, the member for Hamilton West, make a case that says, in effect, "If you have higher taxes, you will have a prosperous economy, and that's the route to go." I'd like to hear statements like that from him. That would be their starting point on the debate. "The more you ramp up your taxes, of whatever category, the more prosperous we're going to be, particularly the government of the day. They'll have more money to spend."

Guess what happened, folks? We had that kind of experiment back in 1990, 1991, 1992. We've seen it in other states and countries throughout the world. I've brought this theme up before, and I still haven't heard a solid case against it. In Sweden, one of the highest-taxed jurisdictions in Europe, what was happening there in the 1980s and 1990s? Their citizens were fleeing, particularly the ones they really needed to maintain and sustain a very comprehensive social safety net that this party across the way has usually espoused as a means of creating social equity, social justice. Those citizens of Sweden, France and the United Kingdom, in those days, where did they go? They fled to the lower-tax jurisdictions. Why? They should have maintained their citizen loyalty to their country and allowed the state to tax them at nearly 100%. It's their duty to do so, to share the wealth.

Why don't people like that? I can think of Bjorn Borg as an example. He went to Monaco. He ought to be condemned in the widest circles of the day and today for leaving. We have Canadians of all walks of life who have left this country because our taxes, even after all our efforts, are still too high. Even British Columbia, even the New Democrats in Saskatchewan, have caught on to the leadership of the idea that a lower tax regime does bring about economic prosperity. Yet we have never heard, and I'm waiting to hear yet in this debate, actually why it's a good idea to have a high-tax regime, and that you can sustain economic growth for the longest time.

Finally, they talk about the United States as if that's the driving force of the provincial economy. But they forget to remind us that to compare the tax rates in Michigan, Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania, our immediate competitors, their tax rates are not significantly higher, they're lower, and when you connect the two there is obviously an inherent, organic connection. It will never be sustained from their intellectual viewpoint to argue that the United States is the only source driving the provincial prosperity that we have helped to bring about. In point of fact, members in the opposition, particularly in the back benches, seem to have cottoned on to the idea that the United States is the great economic light of the world. Guess what? It was free trade to some extent that brought about some of this prosperity—not a very good idea, one that John Turner of the federal Liberals of the day, a very strong—

The Acting Speaker: Your time is up. Comments and questions?

Hon Mr Stockwell: OK, respond to that.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I'll respond to that. Just for the record, I'm donating my \$200 to the cancer assistance program, a program that moved to Concession Street just a few months ago to be next to the Cancer Care Centre, which is next to the Henderson, which we all just saved, so that will be the last time you hear me say that.

Interjection.

Mrs Bountrogianni: We all did.

I would have preferred, instead of getting \$200, for that total sum of \$1 billion to go into something like post-secondary education. The government did give \$1 billion in total for the SuperBuild fund, much-needed money, to renovate our buildings. The university that I was lecturing in before I got elected had all sorts of maintenance difficulties, all sorts of rats, which we didn't need for experiments, running around.

Interjection.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Yes, I have been in this place and maybe a little bit of money here.

The problem with the SuperBuild is that some institutions didn't get any money, because it was dependent on private matches. For example, Mohawk College didn't get any SuperBuild money. I would have preferred that money to supplement the SuperBuild fund.

As well, in the next decade we will need 10,000 new professors to replace those who are retiring and to

address the extra 90,000 students who are coming into post-secondary education. We're still waiting and hoping that the operating grants will increase in the next three years. We had some hint that might happen last night and we're hoping for that, but I would have preferred for some of that \$1 billion to be committed to that immediately rather than sit and wait. Colleges and universities need the information to plan, and if we had an announcement of \$1 billion for operating grants in the next three years, it would have been much more preferable. For my \$200, I have the luxury of being able to donate it; some people won't have the luxury, and they will still be sacrificing their health care at the same time.

Mr Christopherson: I would like to comment, if I can squeeze it into the two minutes, on some of the remarks made by the member for Durham and the member for Etobicoke North.

The member for Durham talked about Mother's Day when he talked about the \$200, and then he talked about putting a human face on it. But what struck me was that of course there are an awful lot of mothers on Mother's Day who won't be getting the \$200 because they didn't earn enough money to pay enough income tax. Their children won't have the money to be able to buy their mom the kind of gift they would like to. You can accuse me of tugging at the heartstrings, but I didn't raise it, your member did, and he's the one who wanted to raise the impression that somehow this budget and Mother's Day go hand in hand. All I could think of was all those individual moms who are in situations where they're not benefiting from this. That includes moms who have disabled children who are not able to access buildings, even public buildings, in this province, and there wasn't one dime to do something about that; moms who can't provide a decent home, a roof over the heads of their kids. Your budget did absolutely nothing for those moms, moms who desperately need child care spaces so they can go after some of these jobs that you want to brag about. But you didn't create a single space with this budget. So there's a whole lot of moms in the province of Ontario who won't enjoy—you know what? It's not the majority, and that's why I suppose some people can afford to say, "Well, we don't need to worry about that." But the fact of the matter is, there are far too many moms who won't have the kind of Mother's Day that others will have, and many of those others were already going to have an excellent Mother's Day. It'll just be that much richer. What about those moms, I say to the member for Durham?

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The Acting Speaker: Further comments and questions?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke North can only be a responder. It cannot be comments and questions.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I think one of the things that has been omitted in this discussion is the underlying principle that has been recognized by this

government, and that is simply that it is taxpayers' money we're talking about. One of the things that people in government forget is where the money comes from. This government has recognized from the beginning that it is the taxpayers' money that we're talking about, and this dividend is simply the manifestation of that principle: the principle that we are recognizing that it is the taxpayers' dollar.

There are obviously those, as we have heard from the comments across, who would have themselves preferred to see money go elsewhere. But this dividend is designed to show that it is possible to cut taxes, create jobs and pay for the priority items identified by people across this province: health care, education, safe communities. These are all issues that we recognize are important. But most of all, we recognize that it is taxpayers' money and we know that by giving them the money, they will make the best decision, a decision, by the way, that will be manifest, whether it is by giving it to charities of their choice, whether it's making contributions to their community or whether in fact it cumulatively will go to further job creation and the kind of environment that we all will enjoy in this province.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I appreciate the opportunity to make some comment on the debate that has taken place so far this evening. I have to say that the member for Etobicoke North did catch my attention, especially with his comment with regard to the Liberal backbench. You know, he gives a great sermon about us on this side of the House and what we believe and what we espouse, but I would suggest he knows very little about being Liberal. He suggested that maybe we in the backbench are very vehemently Liberal, and I'm most proud of that and I hope that has been reflected in the comments that we make. It certainly is a reflection of what the people in my riding are saying to me. So when you hear what I am saying as a member of this backbench, you're hearing what I'm hearing in my riding from the people of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, and I think they're raising some very good points.

I believe again it was the member for Etobicoke North who indicated that this government has faith in the people of Ontario to manage their money well. Well, I would suggest to the government that the people in Ontario have lost faith in your government's ability to provide them with the level of service that we once had, that we don't enjoy in the area of health care as we once did. When I talk to the people in my riding who now have to wait many months for critical cancer treatment and, if they are to access it, have to go to the States—that has not always been the case. I live very near to a facility that provides cancer care treatment. So people in our part of the world have lost faith in the responsibility of government to provide the necessary services so that we can live healthy and productive lives. They may have more money in the bank, but they're not being served as well as they once were.

The Acting Speaker: Two-minute response.

Mr Young: I want to also take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the members who have spoken before me for two minutes each, those being the members for Hamilton Mountain, Hamilton West, York North and, most recently, Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

I do appreciate the fact that views are very strong about this budget because, as I said at the outset, this is a budget that is unprecedented and it undoubtedly will attract attention. I'm pleased to say that the attention has been, by and large, almost exclusively positive. The applause has come from almost every corner of this province.

One of the things, though, that we have heard from time to time is, what has this government announced for this great city of Toronto? I'm one of the representatives from that city, as is the Minister of Labour.

I want to take a few moments to talk about the numerous initiatives set out in this budget document that deal directly with this city because, of course, we know that all of the initiatives, whether it be the taxpayer dividend that's going to residents of this great cosmopolitan community or whether it's the tax cuts that will make our businesses more competitive or whether it's the tax cuts for individuals that will lessen the burden that each individual taxpayer has, affect the residents of Toronto. But we also have very positive announcements in this budget about waterfront redevelopment. We're still waiting for the federal government, by the way, to come to the table, but we have a commitment from this government.

We have \$15 million committed to the Ontario Science Centre redevelopment. I encourage you to talk to the individuals who work at that fine institution and they will tell you just how excited they are about that new funding.

There is going to be for the GTA area, including Toronto, a new Telehealth service, much like they have in northern Ontario, that will assist us on a day-to-day basis, and there are additional capital dollars for our hospitals, dollars that are flowing through, even as we speak, to the hospitals in this great city.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I understand we have unanimous consent to defer the leadoff for our party until our finance critic is able to be here.

The Acting Speaker: Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mrs McLeod: I am very pleased to have an opportunity to participate in the debate and hopefully bring a little bit of a sense of reality from this side of the House to balance the self-congratulatory hour which we have just survived here.

This is a bill, An Act to pay a dividend to Ontario taxpayers, cut taxes, create jobs and implement the Budget, and I would suggest that the name of the bill says everything about the Mike Harris government and the Mike Harris government's priorities. It says that it is concerned almost solely—perhaps solely—with tax cuts and that its budget is really all about tax cuts. It was widely touted before the budget came out that this was going to be the

health budget, because Ontarians were concerned about their health care, because there's a decreasing sense of confidence, as my colleague has just said, in having access to health care in this province. So the government had heard the message of Ontarians and this was going to be the health budget.

But it's not a health budget. This is a budget about tax cuts. It's a great budget if your priority is about tax cuts. It's a great budget if you're a corporation, a big business corporation. It took them five years, I say to the member for Willowdale, to understand that they had beaten up on small business so badly in this province that they were going to have to do something for small business. Five years later they're finally looking at something for small business and still the balance of the benefit in this budget is for the largest corporations and for those wealthy enough to engage in speculation on the stock market. If you're an average taxpayer looking at this government's priorities and what you get out of their tax cuts, you get \$1 for every \$5 that goes to the largest corporations and the largest income earners in this province.

So it's a great budget if you're one of the really well-to-do or one of the big business people: \$8 billion in tax cuts when this budget is fully implemented. And the government said that this was going to be a health care budget? I'm the health care critic so you'll understand that I had a particular sensitivity when I looked for a budget that was supposed to be a health care budget and I found that the government statement about what it was putting into health care was \$1.4 billion. I'm going to come back to that. That was the government's statement about what it was doing for health care in this budget: a \$1.4-billion increase. Well, there's \$4 billion in corporate tax cuts alone—\$4 billion—supposedly there in order to make our businesses more competitive with our American neighbours.

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But in fact most economists would argue, even on the basis of tax rates, that our businesses are comparable with our neighbours' to the south. The thing that gives us the great economic advantage over our neighbours to the south and the reasons why our exports are so high that it's causing some concern for our finance critic—who I'm sure will speak to that when he has an opportunity—is because of the strength of our medicare system. If that's an economic advantage, I ask you, why would this government want to put its priority into \$8 billion more worth of tax cuts, \$4 billion in corporate tax cuts, and sacrifice health care in order to do that? I guess one of my real quandaries is why the government would spend \$8 billion in tax cuts and \$1 billion of that is for something that can at best be described as a \$1-billion "Your cheque's in the mail" advertising campaign.

I want to come back to the whole question of the health care increase, the \$1.4-billion supposed increase in health care spending in this budget, which is actually, if you take one-time spending from last year into account about \$1.1 billion. Then if you were actually to recognize that they take another \$1 billion out that they were

spending on capital last year that they're not spending this year, and look at the total health care spending increase, it's considerably less than \$1 billion, considerably less than the \$1-billion "Your cheque's in the mail" advertising campaign. In fact, the Toronto Star cited two different analyses that suggested that the actual increase in health care spending in this budget is about \$49 million. It's very difficult to know exactly what dollars are going into health care in any given year because, as we've seen, the numbers tend to change from month to month in terms of what the government says it's going to spend and what it actually spends.

I'm not going to take a lot of time to get into the federal-provincial funding levels in this budget, because I recognize that, as we've said in this House before, we need more health care funding from both levels of government. I recognize there have been tax cuts from both levels of government. But I do think we should just note in passing that of the increase in health care spending in Ontario over the last two years, fully 53% of that has come from increases in federal funding for health care. So I don't think the government can use as an excuse the fact that the federal government has not increased health care spending in the last two years. This is all about this government's commitment to tax cuts as a priority, far and away beyond any concern they have for health care, a \$49-million increase in health care spending, perhaps, versus \$8 billion in health cut commitments.

I want to just look at the \$1 billion, the \$200 that each relatively well-off, at least income-earning, Ontarian is to expect to find in their mailboxes. I know a number of people on the other side of the House tonight have said: "You know, you could take your \$200—it was taxpayers' money." I don't understand that argument. Of course it's taxpayers' money. Where else would the government's money come from, other than taxpayers? If we were talking about the Conservative Party, we could talk about a different source of contributions, but the money the government has at its disposal is taxpayers' money. What a moot point that is in this debate.

The question is, what do taxpayers want you to do with their money? You have chosen to give \$1 billion back with \$200 cheques in the mail. The members opposite have said, over the course of the evening, "You know, if you don't want your \$200, if you think there's something better to do with \$200, you can put that money into a charity and you'll even get a tax receipt for it."

I suggest to the members opposite, they've missed the whole idea of government. The whole idea of government is to use taxpayers' money, which it collects, in a way that benefits the citizens as effectively as possible. You do that in one way by putting it into health care. There's not a single Ontarian who can meet any portion of their health care needs or deal with any of their concerns about access with \$200.

Come and talk to people in my riding, who are having to take money out of their pocket for northern health travel because they are northerners, because the northern health travel grant program does not cover the costs for

those who have to leave their home community to get health care if you happen to live in the north. They're not talking about a \$200 expense that can be covered with this one-time-only \$200 cheque in the mail.

Come and talk to Alan Rawlyk, a pensioner in my riding who's now spent \$10,000 of his own money to get medically necessary care and who's had to dip into his pension fund in order to cover that \$10,000. If the members opposite are tired of me raising Mr Rawlyk, I'm afraid they're just going to get more and more weary because I'm going to keep raising the concerns of constituents like Mr Rawlyk until the government understands that a \$200 cheque in the mail may be good public relations as they give this tax dividend, but it's going to do absolutely nothing for the anxieties of Mr and Mrs Rawlyk as they wonder where the next \$2,000 is going to come from for their next trip to Toronto that won't be covered.

I look at what that \$1 billion alone—even \$1 billion of that tax cut—if it had actually been put into the health care budget this year might have done, because again I say, it's not a \$1.4-billion increase in health care. It is more like \$49 million or certainly less than half a billion dollars going into health care operating at best. If you took that and you added to that budget the \$1 billion that this government is going to put in the mail, what would that buy in terms of health care for taxpayers?

I remind the government that Ontario taxpayers have said their number one concern for the expenditure of government dollars is health care. What could you buy with \$1 billion for the Ontario citizen who wants health care? First of all, you could buy some care in hospitals. You could make sure that if people need a hospital bed, it's going to be there. If they need surgery, they're going to get it in something less than six months, or if it's cataract surgery you're looking for in my community, it's probably going to be a year.

You could start to deal with the hospital deficits, because in this budget there's at best \$100 million for hospitals over and above what they gave to hospitals last year. We all saw the crisis in access to hospital care. We saw the emergency rooms overcrowded. We saw the ambulances that were bypassing emergency rooms because there was literally no room in the hospitals, and often during periods this winter there was no room in hospital after hospital. We saw a woman in labour with twins having to be flown from Brampton, I believe to Ottawa, because there was no room in the largest city in the country for her to give birth to her twins.

The government could have taken some of that \$1 billion, not even all of it, and they could have solved the hospital deficit problem. They could have finally brought in a funding formula that would address the needs of hospitals. Remember the auditor said the funding formula has nothing to do with the needs of patients. They could have brought in a funding formula that would address the needs of patients, solved the deficit problem for hospitals, opened some new hospital beds and maybe next winter we won't face the emergency room crisis that we

faced this year. That would only have taken a small part of the \$1 billion that's going into cheques in the mail. That would be a good use of taxpayers' money.

If the government wanted to do something maybe a little bit different with that \$1 billion and improve access to health care, they might have looked at home care. Do you know that with \$1 billion—I'm not even talking about the rest of the \$8 billion in tax cuts, just the \$1 billion that's going into cheques in the mail. Do you know that \$1 billion put into home care would double the home care budgets for all of the home care agencies in this province? The government puts \$1 billion into home care, and those home care agencies are having to deal with people who are coming out of hospitals sicker and faster because the hospital budgets have been squeezed.

The government's answer has been to ration home care. If you need personal care support, if you're a frail, elderly senior, you're only going to get two hours a day, at best. The home care agencies are having to take the \$1 billion they get from the government and put it more and more into the acute care of patients who can't find a place in the hospital because the hospital budgets aren't large enough. So they could have taken that \$1 billion and they could have doubled the home care budget. I don't think that's where you'd put the whole \$1 billion, but it is, I think, a reasonable use of the money of taxpayers, of Ontario citizens who say they want their dollars used for health care.

Up where I come from, and in fact in about 100 communities across this province, Ontario residents would have told this government another use that they would like to see made of their \$1 billion. They might like to see some new medical school spaces created so that we could deal with the acute physician shortages that are facing at least 100 communities across Ontario, and that's by the government's own numbers. Dr Robert McKendry says we're at least 1,000 physicians short. We can't get the government to acknowledge that there's a shortage yet, let alone deal with it, but they obviously knew that the public was concerned, the Ontario citizen, the taxpayer was concerned, because they put a very deliberate line into the budget that said, "I am ... announcing today that we will implement Dr Robert McKendry's recommendations to increase the number" of medical school spaces.

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I thought: "All right, it's a small amount of money, \$11 million, not a large part of that \$1 billion, but at least it's a step in the right direction to deal with physician shortages so that people will have greater access. Maybe the 25% of the Ontario population who can't get a family doctor will have a chance a few years down the road of getting a family doctor because this government's going to put \$11 million into creating new medical spaces."

After having given credit to the government for taking a small step in the right direction, however belatedly, I found out later in the day that they were not creating new medical school spaces. They were trying to create the impression they were responding to that particular

Ontario taxpayer concern by suggesting they were, when in fact all they were doing was reannouncing something they had announced back in December, which has nothing to do with creating new medical school spaces in either our existing medical schools or in a new medical school in northern or rural Ontario. I think that would be another very responsible and appropriate use of a small part of that \$1 billion.

I think most of the Ontario population who are concerned about access to health care—I really believe it's a growing majority—would say that a very appropriate use of a significant amount of that \$1 billion would be increasing access to primary care. Part of that is dealing with the physician shortages, undoubtedly, and part of it is ensuring not only that we have physicians involved in primary care, but that we have a comprehensive approach to primary care that involves other practitioners, other health care providers, working together as a team to provide really comprehensive, first-access health care, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and maybe even dealing with issues of prevention of illness.

I can tell you that if you look at primary care reform, because the government did try to suggest that somewhere in among all the tax cuts there was money for primary care reform in this budget, the only money that's there for primary care reform is to implement the agreement with the Ontario Medical Association. So the only money that's there that has anything to do with primary care reform has to do with the way in which we pay physicians.

That has nothing to do with the other health practitioners. You should hear the nurses' reaction to this budget. The nurses of Ontario certainly don't think that the \$1 billion, the cheque in the mail, is going to be nearly as effective as putting that same \$1 billion into hiring more nurses, and particularly more nurse practitioners, to move into truly comprehensive primary care reform. In fact, the nurses aren't even sure that the money that was in last year's budget for nurses is actually going into full-time nursing care for patients in this province.

I'm going to run out of time to suggest all the other areas where that \$1 billion could have been used to improve access to health care to make this truly a health care budget, which the government said it was. It didn't say it was a tax cut budget; it said it was a health care budget. When I find there's \$8 billion for tax cuts and less than \$500 million for health care at best, it obviously concerns me.

I want to talk about all the ways the individual \$200 coming together to make \$1 billion could have been used to make this a health care budget. One of the ways, one really small way, is that it could have offset the \$50 million in further delisting of health care that we are about to see. One of these areas that we know for sure is going to be delisted is rehabilitation funded under our hospital insurance scheme, under OHIP. There's \$17 million currently in rehabilitation. Do you know how much money the government put into rehabilitation as

they're about to delist \$17 million worth of rehab services? They put \$1 million into that. I'm pleased about that as a northwesterner because I happen to know it's going to go into northwestern Ontario, because when they pull out the OHIP clinics in my part of the province, we have no rehab left. So I think they put \$1 million in the budget to help us out in the northwest, but they could have used a little bit of that \$1 billion to make sure that people would not have to pay privately for rehabilitation.

If I'd had my way, they would have taken more than the \$1 billion. They would have taken a good chunk of the \$8 billion going into the tax cut and as a government they would have brought back into the publicly funded health care system some of the \$12 billion in health care services that are being paid for privately by Ontarians today. Some 34% of our health care is being paid for privately, the largest percentage of any province in this country in terms of how much people pay for privately out of their pocket.

I'll tell you again, as with Mr Rawlyk on his northern health travel, people who have to pay privately for their home care, privately for their drugs, privately for their rehabilitation or privately to get health care when it's not available in their communities are not helped by \$200. It doesn't go anywhere. Do you know how much it would cost to have to go to a private rehab clinic to get rehabilitation after knee surgery? Probably about \$1,800 to \$2,000, yet that kind of coverage is going to be lost, and particularly lost to seniors, because it wasn't a priority for this government.

I wish I had time to go on and talk about what the government might have done even with \$1 billion when it comes to cancer care, how it might have been used to deal with the shortages of trained professionals to stop the necessity of referring people out of Ontario or to northern Ontario, as the case may be, to get cancer care that they can't get in southern Ontario. I'm not going to get into the fact that if that happens you have all your costs recovered and how inequitable that is for northerners, or the fact that the government could have used some of the \$1 billion to deal with the northern health travel grant program and make it equitable for northerners, providing the same kind of coverage they saw fit to provide for those from southern Ontario. I'm not going to deal with that today, but I just wish the government could have anticipated the crisis we're about to face in access to chemotherapy and had put some money into this budget to deal with that growing crisis.

I want to conclude by recognizing that this government believes that a strong economy is really what provides the money for medicare. They want to argue that these \$8 billion worth of tax cuts are going to strengthen the economy, and that once you've got a strong and growing economy that's good for health care. I might agree about the good economy being good for health care. I would debate whether tax cuts are really serving the purpose of the growing economy. But I would like to also argue that a good economy will only provide support for medicare if the government in power chooses to take

the dollars that are generated from that good economy and put them into health care. This government in this budget has clearly said it is not prepared to take the growth of a good economy and put those dollars into health care. They want them in tax cuts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):
Comments?

Mr Christopherson: I want to compliment the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan on her analysis of exactly what this budget means. You're right, that whole hour of self-congratulation was a bit much, given the fact that a whole lot of people are left out of the celebrations. Yes, it includes the very poor, but it includes an awful lot of middle-class people who have no choice but to rely on a public health care system, a public education system, and a Ministry of the Environment that protects our water and the air our children breathe. So this is not just some rant against tax cuts per se; it's about an overall theme you have put together that benefits those who already have. Then you try to look down your nose and wave away with disdain those of us who say: "Wait a minute. There are a few million people who have been left out of this."

I intend to do an exercise similar to that which the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan has done this evening, which is to talk about some of the things that could have been done with the \$1 billion that you've given away, as an attempt at a tax bribe of \$200 to everybody, which I really believe is beginning to backfire as people understand that past the headlines we still are going to need 60,000 to 90,000 nurses between now and 2011. That's real. And 200 bucks in your pocket every year for the balance of your term is not going to come anywhere near replacing a nurse when it's your family member who's in distress and needs that health service.

Mr O'Toole: I must admit I'm quite disappointed with the comments made by the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan. She should recognize that we are dealing with the issue of the dividend. She might think, as the health critic, that she's empowered to turn it into a debate on health care, but I want to set the record straight. Tom Kent, who's the social policy adviser for the federal Liberals, said it all when he recognized that Allan Rock, Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin have taken about \$1.7 billion out of the health care system of Ontario. Our province has put back in from \$7.4 billion to \$22 billion.

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I can tell you that this budget is about health care: investments of \$1 billion invested in hospitals to accelerate capital restructuring; \$500 million for research infrastructure; \$235 million for the hospital sector, primarily for transitional issues; \$110 million to enhance patient care; \$54 million for priority programs such as cancer care, end-stage renal disease and cardiac care; \$45 million at maturity to Telehealth, a toll-free health advisory number on a 7-24 basis, seven days a week, 24 hours a day; \$30 million annually to develop strategies aimed to integrate and strengthen aspects of stroke prevention; \$21 million over three years for projects testing blood conservation and bloodless surgery techniques; \$11

million annually to address physician shortages; free tuition for medical students who relocate; \$10 million over two years for the health integration program; \$10 million for a patients' bill of rights; \$6 million annually to provide education and training for level II neonatal units; the list goes on.

This budget addresses health care. Who's missing in health care? The Liberal government. I want to hear more from the health critic—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Patten: I'd like to congratulate my colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan. Right off the bat I think she identified the core issue: This bill clearly expresses the values of this particular government. When my colleague identified and made the statement, she did not elaborate too much on it, but it is certainly true that when we hear many ministers talk about competitive advantage—the labour minister, of course, talks about this frequently—we find when we look at the competitive advantage in this country versus our neighbours to the south, of course it's our health care plan. Therefore, when you talk about trying to shore up and make a universal contribution not just to those who are in a position to pay tax but to those seniors who pay no tax, those people who are truly poor, those people who have not participated well, this has been said a number of times but it should be underlined: One thing at least that can be done would be to strengthen our health care program.

I'd like to refer to a program. The member for Durham quoted someone at the University of Toronto. I'd like to quote somebody from the University of Toronto as well. This is Thomas Wilson of the Institute for International Business at the University of Toronto: "I hope this does not set a precedent. We'd be much better off applying that kind of rebate to pay down the Ontario debt by another billion dollars, and then that would enable future reductions in rates of tax." He goes on to explain his worry that this is not a sound investment, and everyone knows that the doubling of the contribution to reduce the debt to \$1 billion will still take about 114 years and most of us will not be around to do that.

The Kitchener-Waterloo Record says—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I'd like to comment on the member from Thunder Bay's comments this evening in the House. I would point out that for the Liberal opposition it doesn't come out of their mouths easily to talk about tax cuts. Tax cuts are foul language—to the Minister of Agriculture who is sitting here, I'm not talking about chickens. They refer to tax cuts as foul language. In fact, I've heard Liberals refer to take-home pay as unused tax room. It's obscene the way they talk about taxes and how all money has to flow to the government.

The federal Liberal government did give a tax cut, but they took it kicking and screaming, and still that tax cut is less than the surplus in the unemployment insurance fund. So it's not really a tax cut at all. They're taking it with one hand and giving it back with another. They'll

end up with more money in their pockets. Tax cuts in Ontario are going to hard-working Ontarians, Ontarians who pay their taxes; obey the law; go to work every day; the vast majority of Ontarians who have suffered through the recessions of the 1990s; the people who have suffered through the downsizing; suffered through taking two or three part-time jobs in order to make ends meet through a recession that was brought on by this opposition government. It's about time those Ontarians received some recognition for their contributions and received a tax cut. They're nice words, "tax cut." There's nothing obscene about it. It's the right thing to do in Ontario today and I'm proud to be part of a government that has finally implemented tax cuts for the hard-working people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the comments of my colleagues. I want to assure the member for Halton that I have absolutely no difficulty talking about tax cuts, I have no difficulty talking about priorities and I'm prepared to acknowledge that I do think there is something obscene about a budget that has \$8 billion worth of tax cuts, \$4 billion worth of corporation tax cuts and less than \$1 billion for health care, when health care is the number one priority for the people of this province.

I appreciate the member for Durham listing all the small Band-Aids that the government inserted at different places in the budget in order to try and convince the Ontario populace that they were concerned about health care—Band-Aids where the bleeding is worst, but not a single thing, I say to the member for Durham, that will really improve access to health care on the front lines for people who need it in this province.

The government's inability to get it, to give us back this recitation of the little bits and pieces of things that they do to try to make it look as though they're addressing health care issues, reminds me of the Minister of Northern Development last week responding to a question about patients from northern Ontario who have to leave their community in order to get cancer care, at considerable cost to themselves. His response to that question—it wasn't my question—was to talk about the teleconferencing initiative, much as the member for Durham has tonight. Teleconferencing is a good thing, it's a helpful thing, but it's not a way to cure cancer and it will never be a way to cure cancer. We need access to real care in northern Ontario communities, in southern Ontario communities and even in Toronto, where there's increasing concern about adequate access to health care.

I'm prepared to say positive things about health care when the government does something positive. I just can't find very much to say about what this government is doing for health care other than the way in which they're opening the doors to increased privatization, both in terms of private providers and in people having to pay privately for their health care. I say again, people would rather have their \$200 used to pay for health care and not have to pay—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate.

Mr Christopherson: I do appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate.

I realize that politically speaking the enemy is thataway, however, there is a point that has to be made here. I'm not going to dwell on it, but I am going to make the point. That is that it is somewhat galling to listen to our colleagues in the Liberal caucus condemn again another series of tax cuts and argue that that money could have been better spent on public education, public health care, the disabled, the environment, many of the same kinds of issues that we raised, yet when we went into the last election less than a year ago, they were not prepared in their election platform to do anything about the tax cuts. They wanted to leave the tax cuts—

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: I'm not looking for your applause; it hurts my argument.

They wanted to enjoy, if you will, the political benefits of being able to say "We're going to leave the tax cuts in place," but then went on to say they're still going to find money for education, for health care. Well, guess what, I say to my Liberal friends next to us here: You can't have it both ways. You can't condemn the tax cuts and then keep them. You can't say you're going to make expenditures on public health care and education if you're not going to show where the money has come from. As unpopular as it might have been—

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: Really, I'm not looking to curry favour from any of you by way of applause, but I am pointing out that there is a difference between the two opposition approaches that are being heard. In the last election, as much as it was unpopular in some quarters—I make no bones about that—at least we were right up-front and said we'd condemn the tax cuts because you cannot put money and investments in health care and in education and have the tax cuts. We know from our time in office that you've got to show where the bucks are going to come from. We did say that for anyone earning \$85,000 a year or more, and that was only the top 6% of all income earners, that would have given us the billions of dollars we needed to pay for our commitment. I just want to make the distinction between the two opposition parties in terms of criticizing tax cuts and then being prepared to put your political future on the line, if you will, to back up those kinds of criticisms.

Interjections.

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Mr Christopherson: I'm being urged by Liberals to move on, and move on I shall do. I'm not interested in fighting the last election. Believe me, I don't want to fight the last election; not the one before that either, for that matter.

I want to do something that is probably a little unexpected to at least one member across the way. I want to take up the member from Etobicoke North's challenge. In one of your two-minute rebuttals you put the challenge, I think specifically to us and maybe even specifically to me, in talking about tax cuts—I don't want to put words

in your mouth—to the extent that, "How can anyone advocate that you have a stronger economy when taxes are high?" Is that fair to say? OK. He's nodding that's fair. You know what? It's a fair question too.

I would just like to take the opportunity, while I'm dealing with the macro picture in my early comments during my time speaking now, to say to you that one of the things we have the greatest trouble with is not tax cuts per se. I don't know anybody who has a philosophy that there ought to be 100% taxes or there ought to be 80% taxes, that that's what people want. That's not desirable by anyone. No one likes to pay taxes. Any politician of any political stripe would like to decrease taxes and obviously they'd like to do it in a way that maintains the service as well as gives the money.

The problem we've had all along with your agenda with regard to tax cuts is that you, like the Liberals, wanted it both ways, only you wanted it in reverse. You wanted to give all the tax money back and say that you were still maintaining the health care services and the education services and environmental protection, and the reality is you didn't. You didn't do that. In fact a lot of the money you're spending this year is money that's being reinvested in the health care system and the education system—not the environment yet but at least in those two areas—to try to repair some of the damage you've already done.

The next point is that we had strong objections to implementing the tax cuts before the budget was balanced. I know there are some over there who will say: "Balanced budget? When did a New Democrat ever think or care about a balanced budget?" I think I've heard that from you, and I'm seeing some of the members across the way nodding their heads; most, it seems. But let me point out, first of all, that the first province in this country, in the modern economic era, that balanced their budget was the NDP government in Saskatchewan. That's a fact. That is an absolute fact.

Secondly, it was Tommy Douglas, who is the father of our universal health care system—what a lot of people don't know or have forgotten is that during the 16 years that Tommy was the Premier of Saskatchewan, it wasn't until the 14th, into the 15th, year that he actually brought forward his public health plan, and it was only the first step.

I can tell you from experience, having sat on that side of the House, as you know too, that the groups and individuals who make up one's political party put a lot of pressure on you to do certain things. Tommy was under enormous pressure to make this move, but his commitment was that he was not going to do anything that couldn't be sustained fiscally, for the simple reason that if he did it in that fashion there would just be a right-wing government that comes in, uses the fiscal argument as the shield and obliterates health care. It sounds a bit like what's going on in some places across the country today. However, that was his argument and I think it was valid to the extent that that was the cornerstone of the universal health care system that in many ways defines us

as Canadians as opposed to other nationalities around the world.

The concept of tax cuts and balanced budgets is not foreign to us as a philosophy. The notion of doing it before the books were balanced to us was wrong. Had you balanced the budget first before you put the tax cuts in place, you'd have balanced the budget years ago.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, yes. You can't say no, because there's \$6 billion to \$7 billion a year that's a tax expenditure that is revenue that was lost. In fact, if you look at the numbers, not only would the budget have been balanced years ago had you not done the tax cuts first; that would have been in the absence of cutting \$1 from any ministry. I think that shows itself, and the member from Scarborough-Agincourt makes the point very succinctly. I think that the proof in the pudding is the fact that your credit rating today is still the same as it was the day you took over power from us back in 1995. Why? Because economists, who don't have a particular party to support or an axe to grind—it's the most cold calculation in the world; it's dollars, dollars, dollars. And the reality is that our credit rating on the international bond market is no better now than the day you took power, because the economists considered it to be less than fiscally prudent to make the tax cuts before you balance the budget.

My last point on this, because I thought it was a very pertinent question and a legitimate challenge, is that we do see the issue of taxes very differently. I say that without trying to be funny. We do see them very differently. You're very much in the individualistic mode, that this \$200 or that \$5,000 can always be spent better by the individual, and then of course you really spun it up with the state spending it, categorizing and characterizing it that way.

But we stand back and take a look at the fact—and I say this a lot because I think it's something we should never forget—that the United Nations has chosen Canada, I believe it's five times now in a row, as the best place in the world to live. That was not based on the fact that we have a tax system that keeps the most away from collectivism; it's based on the fact that we have historically—and mostly Tories, because your party, at least the old Progressive Conservative Party, was in power for 42 years, longer than any of the totalitarian states in eastern Europe. That's how long you were in power—42 years—and during that time the notion that we would all contribute to paying for a publicly accessible health care system and an education system that was available to all our children regardless of their income, based solely on their ability and their desire to work, was what helped make this the best place in the world to live; the fact that we had strong environmental laws, the fact that we had strong labour laws, the fact that we had in place at one time municipal laws that supported good communities, safe communities, progressive communities. So much of that is gone now. So the difference between us is that the

idea that collectively we can build a better society is one that we put foremost—fairness, equity, justice.

I realize that if you count your money by the millions, my kind of argument doesn't really stick much; it will to some, but by and large people who count their money by the millions, let alone the tens or hundreds of millions, aren't really all that concerned about a public health care system or a public education system because, of course they've got the means, the personal independent means, to pay for it. With this budget, I will argue on behalf of the New Democratic caucus, you have played to their argument and played to those individuals and against the history and tradition of Ontario. That's what really infuriates us. You hear me many times, and my colleagues also, being very loud and very passionate. The reason is because we see something that took decades to build being destroyed and lost.

2040

If you're in that part of the population that has a lot of money, you wouldn't feel that. Nor would it be as big a priority. I'm not suggesting they're bad people, but the life they live is not one where what's going on in the schoolyard has to be a big priority for them if they can choose whatever private school to send their kids to; or the fact that there's a backup in surgeries if they can jump on a plane and fly anywhere in the world to make sure their loved one gets the service they need. It just stands to reason that the public health care system and the public education system are not as huge a priority because that's not the lifestyle they live.

The flaw, as we see it, in that design of society is that that represents such a small portion. In fact—I have my chart here somewhere; just not handy, of course. I'll come across it later because I have this laid out by segments. The fact is that the top 5% of income earners in Ontario earn \$95,000 a year or more. They will share \$733 million out of the tax cuts that are available, and that's five times their fair share. I can't conceive of how that builds a better society when the health care system still needs money. There's a \$1.8-billion deficit that all of the hospitals in Ontario have. This budget did nothing to address that. We still have, on a per student basis, \$810 less being spent per year on students in elementary and secondary schools. Nothing was done to make that better. In fact, there's a cut in your budget that exacerbates that.

We as New Democrats have a great deal of difficulty understanding how you can accept moving away from a society that was so highly regarded by people around the world—the United Nations, as I mentioned—to a society that seems to be based on, "Me first, me the most, greed, and everyone else be damned." That's the direction we're heading in—certainly that's what this budget spells out—and that's a shame.

That's a shame because my eight-year-old daughter who is to be eight next Sunday, is not going to know the kind of Ontario I was raised in, where the notion was that the education system was there and available, not based on income but based on ability and willingness to work; that there was a health care system where there was

accessibility to all the services that I needed and everyone around me needed when they were needed.

There have always been problems in both those areas—they are huge ministries; they're of great importance—but never this kind of crisis, especially during the biggest economic boom we've ever seen in the history of North America. That's what has us looking at this budget and most of your measures and saying you're just playing to the greedy, because the vast majority of individual Ontarians, as a collective, are losing. There is no fairness in that. There is no equity in that. There is no justice in that. Yes, you got re-elected, and you can point to that and draw whatever conclusion you want, and I won't question your right to govern, but I will continue to question the ethics and the morality of continuing to give to those who already have at the expense of those who have less and in many cases nothing. It's just wrong. It's fundamentally wrong and it doesn't have to be this way.

I want to read from an article that was published in today's *Hamilton Spectator*. It's by Roy Adams, who is a retired professor from McMaster University. He says, in part:

"I was offended by what the Harris Tories did in the budget announced last week.

"From the time they took office in 1995 until now the provincial debt has risen to \$114 million from \$80 million. That's an increase of over 40%.

"If the \$80-million debt that the Tories inherited in 1995 was as bad as their campaign rhetoric claimed it to be, surely \$114 million is much worse. As a result we should expect them to be paying down this much larger debt as quickly as possible.

"Instead, not only have they cut taxes significantly, thereby failing to tap revenues that might have gone to debt repayment, but in this last budget they actually gave back \$1 billion that they had already collected. Most of Ontario's taxpayers will get a one-time payment of \$200 in the mail.

"It's a tax break. That's how I regard it," said Ernie Eves. 'It's the people's money and we're returning it.'

"The subliminal message seems to be, 'Thanks for your money folks, but even though we have a huge debt and lots of people clamouring for us to patch up some of the damage that we've done to social programs, we figure that we don't need it so we're giving it back.'

"The formal Tory logic for this loony action, that undermines the credibility of their alleged concern about the debt, is that it will stimulate the economy. But most serious economists agree that the primary cause of Ontario's recent economic success is the booming economy in the United States."

I know that just to say where this is from is going to drive the Tories crazy, and for that reason alone I read it, but it is the *Toronto Star* and their comments on May 3 read as follows:

"It was a great day to be affluent in Mike Harris's Ontario. Finance Minister Ernie Eves has doled out another round of tax cuts designed to make the province an even more business-friendly place. But for those of us

who need hospital care, affordable housing, better schools, cleaner air, Eves offered skimpier pickings

"But at its heart, Eves's budget gives the most help to those who need it least, while he keeps the screws on helping those in need.

"Basically, with 'an amazing \$5.3 billion' more revenue than projected, he used it for \$5.2 billion in tax cuts rather than restored services.

"This is where the real goodies are for the better off:

"A wonderful deal on stock options—the first \$100,000 each year won't be taxed.

"A cut in Ontario's capital gains tax by a third over five years.

"A cut in corporate taxes—they'll be chopped nearly in half.

"The small business tax falls to 4%, the mining tax to 10%.

"Lawyers, as well as doctors and other 'self-regulated' professionals, will be able to incorporate their way to lower taxes.

"Against this, public services are country cousins.

"Hospitals will get a \$100-million boost in operating spending—not even enough to cover the raise for nurses.

"To get \$1 billion in capital, hospitals will have to raise \$500 million—and still be left without enough nurses

"And then there are the downers, \$90 million cut from municipal affairs and housing—read that, no money for the homeless. There's \$110 million cut from social services, \$57 million from culture and recreation, \$143 million from the environment.

"Often, too, good spending is swamped by the bad in other spending.

"For example, there's \$4 million more for asthma prevention, treatment and control. But there's \$113 million more for the energy department, whose fondness for coal adds to the pollution that aggravates asthma.

"Yes, it's better to be rich enough to escape these annoyances. A lot better this week than last."

When we took a look at the budget and saw all the cuts that you are providing to all of these corporate players—and, by the way, let's be sure we understand the context. When this is looked at historically, it won't escape anyone that all of these tax cuts are happening at a time when corporations are making greater profits than they've ever made before and the hospitals and education system are in the greatest crisis that they've ever been. Simultaneously that's what's happening in our society, and you chose to help out the corporate and the very wealthy sectors that are already making record levels of money. What we don't understand is how this is supposed to make any sense. There is nothing in this budget at all for the disabled, child care, homelessness, affordable housing, poverty—child poverty has increased 118% in Ontario since 1989 and you did nothing about that. On all of those fronts you did absolutely nothing. Aren't disabled individuals part of Mike Harris's Ontario? Aren't families who need child care part of Mike Harris's Ontario? How about the homeless? Do they just not

count? Are they are on the social scrap heap and don't matter? It's far more important to give a corporate tax cut than to make sure a homeless person has a roof? Is that the message Ontario is sending out now? It must be.

2050

I want to make sure I leave enough time to talk about this \$200 because I have to tell you that if there was anything that was symbolic of this government's cynical approach to governing, it's this.

First of all, there's 25% of the population that isn't going to get any of the 200 bucks. They get nothing out of the \$1 billion. Who would these people be? If I made that statement flat out, that 25% of the population is not going to get this \$200, a logical person might think, "I guess what they're doing is making sure that the top 25%, the wealthiest Ontarians, don't get this 200 bucks because they want to make sure it's focused where it'll do the most good." That would be a reasonable, logical, rational thought if you had just heard out of the blue that the Harris government was sending out \$200 cheques to all Ontarians except 25%.

But that's not the way it is. That's not what's happening in Mike Harris's budget, Mike Harris's Ontario. No, that 25% is the poorest of the poor: the same homeless people, the same people in poverty, the same folks who need child care, the same individuals who are disabled or have a disabled family member. It's the same people who don't get the 200 bucks. And then your finance minister wants us to believe that you have a social conscience? That's insulting. The 25% of the population who won't get the \$200 or any part of it are those who didn't earn enough money to pay even \$200 in income tax in a year. Cabinet ministers spend that much on a meal.

Hon Mr Stockwell: How much?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): How much?

Mr Christopherson: That woke them up. Talking about the homeless didn't. Talking about poverty didn't. Talking about child care didn't, but boy, talk about a cabinet minister going out for dinner and suddenly they're awake. I'm not attacking that per se. What I am pointing out is that there are some people who didn't earn enough money to pay \$200 in income tax and they don't get any of the \$1 billion you're giving out. Then you somehow want us to believe that you care. It's just words, empty words.

Then we find out you're going to spend \$3.5 million to mail the cheques out. The member from Etobicoke North was talking earlier in the discussion about a line on the income tax. I wrote it down. I don't remember the context, but he talked about a line on the income tax; I think it was where people could contribute back the \$200. You could have saved the people of Ontario \$3.5 million by adding a line on the income tax form. But no, you wanted to make sure your little public relations exercise got as much exposure as possible, so it's OK for you to take \$3.5 million to send out individual cheques. I don't know what you're going to do with the 25% who aren't going to get it. Are you going to send them a little

sorry note, like you do when you're campaigning: "Sorry I missed you"? Is Mike Harris going to write out little "Sorry I missed you" notes and send those out to the 25% who get nothing?

It's not just the NDP, or for that matter the Liberals, that are condemning this. Earlier the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance was fond of reading out quotes. Here's one for you from the Hamilton Spectator.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Good right-wing paper.

Mr Christopherson: My friend the labour minister said, "Good right-wing paper." Some in Hamilton would argue that editorially they are a right-wing paper. They must have said one nasty thing about you, and that's put them way off side with you folks? They even write in their editorials that when they criticize you, "We tend to support Mike Harris's policies, da da da da. However," and then they do a "Yeah, but...."

In this case, it was published yesterday and it's headed up, "We're \$200 Richer But Are We Any Wiser?" It says in part, "What is the Harris brain trust's real motivation?" speaking to the \$200. "If, as Ernie Eves says, the rebate is just formal recognition that the money belongs to Ontarians, not the government, it sets quite a precedent. (Uh, Mr Eves ... the money you used on that multimillion-dollar ad war with Ottawa that many of us think is a waste? We'd like that back, too, please.)...."

"We elect governments to be the best possible stewards, and to make the most intelligent, constructive decisions. Consider the state of our schools, hospitals, infrastructure and provincial debt, then ask yourself—better yet, ask your MPP—is this the best possible use of one billion Ontario tax dollars?"

The Kitchener-Waterloo Record supports the budget editorially, but even they couldn't pretend not to see what's going on here. They say, in their editorial of May 5: "Obviously, the 'taxpayer dividend' is designed to curry favour. It is a blatant political move. Public relations with the public's cash."

The Brantford Expositor, May 6:

"It's been a couple of days now, and we still haven't figured out what Eves was thinking. His first, and biggest mistake, of course, was not applying the \$1 billion towards paying down Ontario's debt.

"Second, how will sending out cheques stop the money being eaten up by higher deductions from our paycheques for CPP and UIC? Or, for that matter, how will that stop the \$200 being eaten up by higher user fees at provincial parks, for drivers' licenses and other government fees?

"But let's assume, just for the sake of argument, that Eves is smarter than we are and has good reason for what he's doing. But why mail out cheques? Isn't that just about the most expensive and inefficient way to get the money to taxpayers?

"It would cost virtually nothing to offer the money as a credit on next year's taxes. Eves isn't doing that. Instead, he wants the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, a new quasi-independent federal agency, to do the mailing for free."

If I might, that was also just about as absurd as the whole concept that, when it was pointed out or brought to public light that \$3.5 million was going to be wasted mailing it, the response—I believe it was attributed to Eves—was, “Well we’re going to ask the feds for it.” They’re going to ask the feds for it? I thought this was the party that kept saying over and over and over, “There’s only one taxpayer”? Until it suits your purposes to pretend that there are two different taxpayers. There’s a word for that but it’s unparliamentary.

“If the province were to do the job on its own, it would cost about \$3.5 million.

“But whether it’s \$3.5 million or \$350,000, the fact is that it’s wasteful.

“Maybe it isn’t so much to a big-money guy like Eves, but ask any hospital, any school board or any municipal government and they would come up with all sorts of better things to spend the money on than printing cheques and stuffing them in envelopes.

“Here’s a suggestion. While he’s in a spending mood, Eves can be among the first customers for a new service from Canada Post and get his face put on 5.2 million postage stamps to adorn the envelopes containing our cheques.

“Then there would be no doubt who to blame for wasting our money.”

2100

The \$200, aside from the 25% of the population that gets none of it, still amounts to \$1 billion. There are more and more people realizing that for the vast majority of people \$200 is not going to make a huge difference one way or another, but combine all that money and \$1 billion, even in a huge budget like the Ontario budget, can make a difference.

For instance, \$1 billion would kick off an innovative early years education and child care program that would be affordable and accessible to all parents. The total cost after six years of phasing in such a child care system would be \$4 billion, exactly the amount of money this government is giving away in corporate taxes. One billion dollars could restore all but \$7 million in real per capita funding of public schools that this government has stripped from Ontario classrooms since 1995, and we would suggest that you could get the other \$7 million from the \$3-million-plus that you blew on TV ads fighting with the federal Liberals and then kick in the \$3.5 million you’d save by not sending out cheques. You could wipe out that debt. One billion dollars could restore cuts this government made to hospital budgets and go a long way to wiping out their collective \$1.8-billion deficit. It wouldn’t even take \$1 billion for Ontario to get back in the business of creating new affordable housing. That would cost \$780 million and create thousands of affordable homes.

You can’t spend this \$1 billion on all these things, but what we are suggesting is—you had on this list: “Give back \$1 billion and spend an extra \$3.5 million to mail it out so the political benefits, if there are any, come to us. By the way, we’ll do it in such a way that the poorest of

the poor don’t get any of it.” One billion dollars would practically cover the \$1.4-billion price tag OCUGA estimates will be needed to prepare for the pending arrival of the double cohort, something you still haven’t addressed. It would only take \$80 million to restore the capacity of the Ministry of the Environment, and only \$155 million to restore the capacity of the Ministry of Natural Resources after years of cutting. You didn’t do that. In fact, you cut both those ministries again.

You cut at a time when you had a surplus, and you’re giving away billions and billions of dollars. You cut the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources. I suspect that your Minister of the Environment will stand up and say that things are going to be better in the environment as a result of your cuts. I suspect that the things that are not happening, not being checked, not being monitored, not being analyzed, not being enforced, are just another benefit for a lot of your corporate friends who wanted ways around environmental laws. So there’s another benefit to them that will equate to dollars, because you’re going to make it easier for them to make more money. The fact that our environment gets hurt, possibly irreparably, in the process is sort of, says this government: “Tough luck. That’s just too bad.” The same with the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Talk to our kids. Our kids have got this environmental stuff down cold. They’re being raised with the whole notion that we can’t continue to destroy the planet around us. We can’t continue to ignore the fact that sustainable development has to mean something. Maybe all of you are sort of hoping for a *Bladerunner* future, where you’re the ones who get to go off-planet. I don’t know, but I’ve got to tell you, if that doesn’t happen, you can only move so far into the country to get away from air that’s going to give your kids cancer. You can only go so far away before you don’t have fresh water to swim in at your nice comfortable cottages. That affects all of us, and yet you just don’t care. What other explanation can there be?

I happened to mention to Marilyn Churley, who is our environment critic, earlier today that I was trying to make some sense out of the fact that, relatively speaking, it would take very few millions of dollars to remove this criticism. What I couldn’t come up with was why you didn’t just take the millions of dollars—in total, you could repair all the damage you did for \$100 million. That’s a lot of money, but in the context of this budget and these tax cuts in the billions, it’s not really. You could have made all of this political heat and criticism go away.

The only thing I can imagine is that you want to send that message out. You have already decided that no environmentalist is ever going to vote for you, and that to the people who want you to eliminate the protective measures that exist in our laws that are upheld by the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources, you want to send out a message that you’re eating away at that. Rather than convince that part of the population you’re speaking to with words, you do it with

action. So it's even worse than just what you're doing; it's that you're almost bragging about it. It's the only thing that makes sense, because they obviously spent a lot of time crafting this political document, and all budgets are—my party's, the Liberals'—political documents. I'm not suggesting that somehow you've made them different, but you do spend a lot of time on them, and given all the damage you've done to environmental protection and to our natural resources, why would you leave yourself this vulnerable?

There's always the argument that you made a gaffe, and that's entirely possible. It was interesting to watch the finance minister, within a matter of hours after delivering the budget, starting to talk about social services and the homeless. All of this stuff was starting to come out and I don't think you realized that total vulnerability. I would say that speaks to the fact that you don't think a lot about the homeless, the disabled. I'm not saying you're evil—some of you, I'd have to question that—I don't believe that all of you are evil, but I don't believe that enough of you get up every day and give a tinker's damn about our health care system, about people who are in poverty and the homeless and disabled and public transit. I really don't think you do, because if you did, there would be something in the budget. And there isn't. There's nothing.

Mr Chudleigh: We took half a million people off welfare.

Mr Christopherson: What about the disabled, hot-shot? What are you going to say to the disabled?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Halton.

Mr Chudleigh: I couldn't hear you; I was yelling too loud.

The Acting Speaker: I could name you but we'll wait. Member for Hamilton West.

Mr Christopherson: Maybe the member for Halton won't be quite so cocky when he knows that the people who care about the disabled monitor very carefully everything that's said and everything you do in this regard, because you've left them no choice. You wanted to go out of your way, you even leaned over to Hansard and said, "Make sure they know it was me from Halton." They'll know it was you from Halton who didn't care at all and didn't even have the respect to not heckle when somebody was raising the issues about the disabled. That's how much you cared about it.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Perhaps the debate would go better if we directed our comments through the Speaker.

Mr Christopherson: You're right, Speaker. I was on the point of whether or not this was a gaffe, and I suppose it could be, but it's just too big to be that. I just can't imagine that you went ministry by ministry—and I know the process. I was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance for two years myself. I know how carefully everything is looked at. I just can't believe that you would deliberately leave yourself that vulnerable on that issue. Therefore the only other conclusion is that you

deliberately wanted to send out that message. It's part of the fear we have that a lot of the criticizing we do, you like, because it sends the message to your supporters that you're doing what they want. However, what do we do about that? It's not like we're not going to criticize. All we can do is hope that eventually enough people get past the PR and get past the headlines and have a chance to look at what this budget is telling Ontarians. What it's telling Ontarians is that you're making sure there are billions and billions of dollars that are going into your friends' pockets, and if that means you have to take it out of public services, then that's exactly what you're going to do, and that's exactly what you have done.

2110

I want to spend a couple of more minutes on the \$200 since I really think this is one that you called wrong. You thought it through but, at the end of the day, I just don't believe the average citizen believes you on this. I don't believe that Ontarians can be fooled that often and I believe they've been fooled. I'm one of those who sits on this side of the House and watches the names you put on bills: bills to protect the environment, and they do exactly the opposite; bills where you say you're promoting democracy in the workplace, and you're doing the opposite. I happen to believe that over time—unfortunately, far too much time—people will begin to understand that you're not there for the average Ontarian. You're there to con the average Ontarian. The ones who are really winning with you in power are the ones who are sitting right now in very comfortable, I would suggest, overstuffed leather chairs in a wall-panelled room, killing themselves laughing that there were so many Ontarians who bought into your line that you got back into power a second time and they're getting all the cream. They're getting all the benefit while the average Ontarian watches their health care system disintegrate around them; the education system disintegrate around them; our environment being raped; students not going to university because they can't afford the tuition and they can't afford to be in that much debt; labour laws that have been changed to the point where so many workers have lost rights that your party gave them in the first place decades ago. I just don't believe, at the end of the day, there will be enough Ontarians who will buy into this agenda that this will continue. I don't even like to think of what another half or full decade of this kind of governance would mean to Ontario.

Interjection: What about the \$200?

Mr Christopherson: Two hundreds dollars would pay for one month's rent increase for a typical building in downtown Toronto as a result of your rent decontrol. The 200 bucks might pay for the tuition increase announced by the Conservatives over two years for students paying \$5,000 per year. The 200 bucks would pay for two copies of the statement of arrears that the recipients require at least twice a year from the Family Responsibility Office. Two hundred bucks might help recover the cost seniors face because of new user fees on prescription drugs. However, I would remind you that there are an awful lot

of seniors and disabled who don't qualify for the rebate because they didn't pay enough tax because they don't have enough income to pay that kind of tax. Unfortunately, \$200 doesn't even come close to helping adoptive parents pay the \$925 head tax on international adoptions which your government has brought in. Two hundred bucks doesn't come close to paying for the school supplies, the field trips and classroom materials which parents now have to organize in fundraising drives to pay for.

Just as an aside, I'll tell you what is so obscene about the kind of fundraising that has to go on in our schools right now. If you need \$20,000 for a field trip, that is a lot easier to do in a city like Markham or Mississauga, where you have a much higher per capita income—

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): Markham is a town, not a city.

Mr Christopherson: The town of Markham—I stand corrected—or the city of Mississauga. However, the point is that it's a lot easier to do that when you've got average per capita incomes that are \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000, \$80,000, \$90,000 a year rather than in an inner city like Hamilton, Toronto, Windsor or Sudbury—any major older, particularly an industrial, community—where the per capita income is not as high. There is a real inequity there. When you've got an \$80,000 average individual income in a town like Markham, it's a lot easier to get the 20 grand than it is if it's down in the north end of Hamilton, where we have a lot of challenges. You've done nothing about that and your \$200 does nothing about that.

The \$200 might help people recover some of the costs that Ontarians face because new user fees have gone up or have been imposed to go to their parks, to get a driver's licence or to get a fishing licence. Virtually everything that involves contact with this government by way of permission, licence, form, document, anything in officialdom, has gone way up, and in municipalities even more so. But that was easy for you to do. You just downloaded all the responsibilities to the municipalities and let them either cut the service or raise taxes or move to user fees or increase user fees, while you run around and say you've cut taxes—easy to do when you give somebody else all your problems.

The \$200 might help pay for the \$30 fee increase for property tax appeals and the \$50 to \$110 fee increase of business property tax appeals. The \$200 might help pay for the \$45 fee to lodge a complaint to the rent tribunal.

The point of all this is that the \$200 really was a public relations scam, and you're getting called on it. You're going to talk about individualism and people should make their own spending decisions and all that kind of stuff, but I believe the reality is that the vast majority of Ontarians would rather have seen that \$1 billion go into health care, go into education. For that matter, they'd rather have seen it go into debt reduction. Given a choice between returning it the way you did, where 25% of the population, those who could use it the most, aren't even going to get it, I'd rather see you put it towards debt

reduction than what you've done here. I don't think that would be the first choice, I don't think it would be the best choice, but I think it would be a better choice than what you've done here.

It is obscene, to take \$1 billion and give it out \$200 at a time and then spend, waste, \$3.5 million to mail the cheques individually. That's a pretty expensive advertising campaign—\$1,003,500,000 total cost for an ad. Thanks a lot.

I didn't get a chance the other day to talk about post-secondary education in terms of the alternative you chose not to pick. Our universities are 59th out of 60 spots. We're 59th in terms of funding for universities, dead last in Canada. Your answer to that? Bring in privatized universities. This sounds like Snobelen has still got his finger somewhere in the education system: Create a crisis—read that to mean "Screw it up, break it, cause chaos"—and use that as an excuse to step in and do something, and then usually what you say is: "They wouldn't do anything. We're the only ones with the courage to step in."

Believe me, there's nothing courageous or correct about bringing in privatized universities as some sort of quasi-response to the crisis that exists in universities. It is a mess. There are 13,000 professors who need to be hired over the next few years to replace the ones who are retiring—nothing in the budget to deal with that. There are billions of dollars that are needed to repair and maintain our universities—nothing in there to do anything about that. My friend and colleague from Hamilton Mountain is the colleges and universities critic. So while McMaster University is in my riding, she is as familiar as I am with the condition of the actual physical plant of McMaster University. There are parts of that university, a world-renowned university, that are shameful, disgraceful. Why? They don't have the money. They've got to choose between trying to keep the classrooms going or repair holes in the wall in the washroom, tiles coming down in the lecture halls, water seeping out from the floorboards. What kind of nonsense is this? But you've got billions of dollars to give to individuals and companies that are making more money than they've ever made before. And you know what? The reason a lot of them are making that money or that the corporations are making that kind of money is that the people in there benefited from our public education system.

2120

What about students who are in high school right now, looking at university, and saying to Mom and Dad: "I know you can't help me. I had planned all along to work to save enough to go to school, but I can't make enough money working to get ahead of this game, and I'm afraid to come out of school \$30,000, \$40,000 in debt, so I've decided I'm not going to go to university. I'm going to have to do something else." That's got to be pretty heart-breaking for a lot of parents, when they know they've got a smart kid, a kid who will work hard, who could really make something of themselves and by doing that could contribute to society. All that's lost because you decided

that rich people needed more money, that their need for more money, that corporations' hunger for greater profits on top of record profits, is more important than that kid going to university and having a future. How do you justify that?

And it's no better in the college system. My friend from Hamilton Mountain and I share the border on which Mohawk College lies; it happens to fall into my riding, but it's right next to the boundary on hers. They're facing many similar situations. In fact, they got left out of your big million-dollar announcement not that long ago, and they had great plans. They should have fit. They should have got the money. We still don't know why Mohawk College didn't get any of that announcement. All I know is that those of us in the NDP, for sure, believe that putting money into our university system and into our college system is a good investment in the future; it's a good investment in our kids.

I guess you rationalize that the kids of those who already have, who got even more from this budget, don't need to worry about whether tuition costs \$2,000 or \$7,000. They're probably not even going to a university anywhere within Ontario. They have the luxury and they're fortunate to go to maybe other universities that are incredible in cost, \$40,000, \$50,000 a year, so why would this be an issue for that family? I'm not faulting them, I'm just saying it's not something that visits them every day.

But you can't build the kind of Ontario that all of us in this room have benefited from by following the course you're following. You can't have a repetition of the success of the generations now in leadership positions in society, in business and in politics, and that we've had in the immediate past generations since the Second World War, without making the investments in our education system. You can't do it. We'll have a different kind of Ontario. There will be some who will do fine, but it won't be the same sort of "anybody can get there" that Ontario was before. That's going, quickly.

All of you are going to be players in history. Your descendants are going to look back in time and say, "What role did my great-great-grandmother or -grandfather play during that era?" and they're going to take a look at that. I'm going to tell you, a lot of them are going to be awfully sad at where they found their ancestors were, because you're on the wrong side of history. I think you're on the wrong side of humanity here. I think you're playing to the wrong parts of what makes us human beings, good and bad.

We already had the thing working right. Damn. It's not a coincidence that the United Nations picked Canada five times as the best place to live in the world. That's

not a coincidence. You can laugh all you want, but the fact is that you are building an Ontario all right, but you're not building the kind of Ontario that we all benefited from and you're not building the kind of Ontario that would make this as strong as it could be. You're not doing that, and you ought to be ashamed of yourselves. You ought to be ashamed of the fact that you have taken care of so very many wealthy people and left so many other people behind.

The first one who wants to stand up and take the floor and explain why you did nothing for the disabled and for the homeless should feel comfortable doing so, because I don't think you can defend that. You can talk about what you did last year, you can talk about resolutions and letters you've sent, but I don't think you can stand in your place and defend, with any kind of morality, why you had no money for the disabled in Ontario—nothing.

Our education system is going to be worse off because of this budget, our health care system is going to continue to fall further behind as a result, we're going to see more environmental atrocities, we're going to see more damage done to our natural resources, we're going to see more and more people move from middle-class to poor. One of the key things I worry that people don't realize is that they may be safely comfortable, middle-class, modest-income, middle-income, whatever phrase one likes, today, but the trend lines in Ontario are not that you're about to become the next millionaire. It's far more likely you're going to be sliding down into poverty. Believe me, being poor in Mike Harris's Ontario in the year 2000 is not someplace you want to aspire to be. The thing that lets people have a different future—I come back to our education system, especially the post-secondary education system. More and more Ontario students are having to say no to a university future because of dollars rather than ability.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: You know what? The Tories across the way can hoot and holler and shake your heads all you want. Go talk to the students. Go talk to the students of ordinary, middle-class people, not your rich friends, not them. They're OK. Like any student, they ought to be OK and they will be. Go talk to the vast majority of Ontario students and ask them how they feel about the future that you're building for all of us.

This is a budget designed by people who owe things to the very powerful and the very wealthy, and unfortunately, so unfortunately, they delivered.

The Acting Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2128.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**
First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**
Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 10 May 2000

Mercredi 10 mai 2000



**Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr**

**Président
L'honorable Gary Carr**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 mai 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SEMAINE DE L'ÉDUCATION EDUCATION WEEK

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): Aujourd'hui, en cette semaine de l'éducation, la ministre de l'Éducation déposera un projet de loi qui va sans doute avoir un impact substantiel dans la vie quotidienne de tous les enseignants et de toutes les enseignantes au niveau secondaire.

This government seems to be unable to acknowledge the important role of the teachers of this province. This government always seems to be unable to realize that our education system is fortunate enough to have a number of assets: professional, excellent and devoted teachers as well as parents and volunteers who ensure its quality and its good working order.

Je veux profiter de cette occasion afin de proclamer ce que j'ai toujours connu et ce que j'ai vécu comme enseignante : que le personnel enseignant de l'Ontario est la clé du futur de nos jeunes.

We must recognize their professional behaviour, their ability to evolve and their capacity to innovate. We must also thank them for their absolute devotion and for their willingness to share their skills as educators.

La profession enseignante ne nécessite pas de législation les obligeant à participer à des activités parascolaires ; la profession enseignante s'impose déjà cette obligation. Au lieu d'exprimer de la reconnaissance envers notre personnel enseignant, ce gouvernement semble toujours s'acharner à exprimer un mépris profond envers nos professionnels.

Instead of showing gratitude toward our teachers, this government insists on showing a great deal of resentment toward our professionals. To quote the Ontario Teachers' Federation message: "Great expectations, great teachers and government support will lead us to superior results."

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Members' statements, the member for Etobicoke North.

Before the member begins, I would just remind our friends in the gallery—I know they probably don't know; I suspect they're probably a class—that you're not allowed to clap. I'm sure you didn't know that, but just

so you know. What happens normally—when somebody sees somebody they clap, it's a natural thing to do, but unfortunately in the House the gallery can't. Thank you very much for your indulgence.

The member for Etobicoke North.

MISSING CHILDREN

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I'll confine my statements to the two minutes we're supposed to keep our remarks to.

Today marks the opportunity to inform this House that this marks Ontario's ninth annual Green Ribbon of Hope campaign. This campaign highlights the issue of missing, runaway, lost, kidnapped and abducted children in Ontario and throughout Canada. Each year, more than 50,000 children in Canada are listed as missing by the RCMP's missing children registry—enough to fill every seat in the SkyDome. Ontario alone registers over 40% of all missing children cases—over 20,000 in 1998.

Child Find Ontario, a 15-year-old registered charitable organization, is a community partner in the search for missing, abducted and runaway children and teenagers. With the support of 1,000 volunteers in communities across Ontario, they offer support to the families and work with investigating officers to help publicize these traumatic cases. Happily, with the support of the community and in partnership with law enforcement, customs and immigration people, more than 90% of missing children are successfully located.

I would ask that all members please wear green ribbons of hope throughout the month of May and especially on May 25, National Missing Children's Day in Canada.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It's my pleasure to rise in the House today and remind people that all across the wonderful ecological masterpiece known as the Oak Ridges moraine, from Caledon to Cobourg, people are still meeting and fighting to preserve the whole moraine. They haven't been misled by the minister's 1% map that is a non-solution. They want to protect 100% of the moraine. The moraine is just not Richmond Hill. It goes through beautiful places like the Northumberland forest, the plains of Rice Lake, to Orangeville, Caledon, Palgrave. So people are not going to stop fighting for the

moraine because of this 1% announcement the minister made last week.

Next Monday, right here in Toronto, people from all over the moraine will gather in Holy Trinity church near the Eaton Centre to defend and talk about the moraine. We're even going to have Canadian actor Kenneth Welsh speaking beautifully about the moraine in a new poem.

On Wednesday, May 17, people will be meeting in beautiful Ballantrae. There will be 200 or 300 people talking about defending all of the moraine, the 200,000 square kilometres of the moraine, not just that postage-stamp-sized piece the minister talked about. It's all or nothing. It's a comprehensive plan for all of these natural wonderlands that make up our beautiful moraine.

GREAT CANADIAN TOWN BAND FESTIVAL

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): On the July 1 weekend, the sound of music will be echoing throughout the village of Orono as the Great Canadian Town Band Festival gets underway. The event has created a lot of enthusiasm, not just in Durham riding but with musicians across Ontario and indeed the United States, primarily because the festival is the only one of its kind.

This three-day musical celebration is the brainchild of Mr Dave Climenhage of Orono, and will be hosted by the Clarington Concert Band, whose director, Barry Hodgins, has taken this as a personal challenge.

This is a true community event. Many residents have devoted months to this huge undertaking, like Janet Cringle, Sonny Young, Elva Reid, Frances Tufts, John Thompson and Margaret Zwart, to name just a few. Our own Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation has made a wonderful \$35,000 grant to this very worthwhile endeavour. I might also say that my staff member Lori Kay will be participating in the band.

I think this is a great way to showcase the rich musical history of Ontario's rural communities. At last count, 22 bands and performers have been scheduled to appear. There will be a military tattoo at Orono's fairgrounds and an old-fashioned Victorian ball at the town hall. Festival visitors will also have the chance to see the traditional Callithumpian Parade on July 1.

I invite my colleagues and all Ontarians to attend the unique Great Canadian Town Band Festival, running June 30 to July 2. I can assure you everyone is welcome and everyone will have a great time.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): It's an ironic twist that during this Education Week, notices to principals regarding closures have been sent to five rural schools in Lambton-Kent. The inflexible funding formula of "one size fits all" is having a devastating effect on rural schools. Watford public school, East Lambton Secondary School, East Sombra public school, Warwick public school and Zone Township Central school have

been advised to prepare for closure at the end of this school year.

The funding formula that has been waved around as efficient by the Minister of Education is grossly unfair to rural communities. It is not effective and it is forcing closure.

Does this minister understand the value and the need for our community schools to continue to survive in rural Ontario? Rural schools are more than bricks and mortar; they serve as community centres that reflect the vibrancy of smaller towns.

I would ask that the minister show moral and conscientious leadership by requesting that there be a moratorium on these closures and assess carefully the negative impact on these rural communities. Is this province only going to allow mega-size schools? Is there no room for smaller rural schools in southwestern Ontario?

1340

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): The Minister of Education made an announcement earlier on today, which she'll do again this afternoon. She introduces her remarks by saying it's part of its plan to continue improving the quality of education for students. I can't help but be frustrated at the skill these people have to continue telling the public that this is all about improving the quality of education for our students, and presumably our teachers as well. It's got nothing to do with that at all. That's the political game they're playing, making people out there feel good that they're doing something about something or other that has nothing to do with the quality of education.

Two of the issues have to do with extracurricular activities. We all know that 99% of the boards are providing this activity for free, voluntarily, after school. Yet for the 1% in her board, the Durham board, where they've taken away the service, she feels compelled to force every other teacher now to provide it, whether they like it or not.

Secondly, she wants teachers to actually meet the provincial standards set two years ago for the amount of time secondary teachers spend performing key duties. What this means is, we're going to have the same teachers teaching more students, meaning that fewer students will have a better quality of education in the classroom. This is the kind of quality education this minister refers to.

We'll have more time to talk about it this afternoon.

COURAGE TO COME BACK AWARDS

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): Today I would like to draw members' attention to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Foundation's Courage to Come Back Awards. Courage to Come Back is an annual campaign to increase public awareness, raise funds and recognize individuals whose actions and example help

reduce the stigma associated with addiction and mental illness.

The campaign honours individuals from all across the province who are overcoming the challenges of living with a serious illness, an injury or an addiction. This year, nine Ontarians, who are role models and an inspiration not only to those facing similar challenges but to all of us, were honoured.

Anthony Aquan-Assee is a young teacher who has fully recovered from a devastating motorcycle accident. Muriel Cadotte struggled with physical abuse, phobias and alcohol dependence. Emily Markle has recovered fully from a rare and aggressive brain cancer. Carolynne Pratt suffered several complex mental illnesses and has triumphed over homelessness and suicide attempts. Roger Roberts actively volunteers. Robert Ross has recovered from alcohol and heroine abuse. Katherine Simard is overcoming a horrific automobile accident, and Herbert Simpson is inspiring others after recovering from a massive heart attack.

This year's celebrity honouree was Ron Ellis who was nominated and has been treated by Homewood. His stature as a hockey star and a member of the Hockey Hall of Fame is going to be used to increase public awareness of clinical depression. For this he is to be commended.

I congratulate the centre for their leadership in highlighting these truly inspiring individuals—inspiring to all of us.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Today Sudbury's medical community has issued a dire warning that a health care crisis is imminent in our area. As of June 1, patients can expect even longer waiting times, and referrals to southern Ontario for some specialized care.

Sudbury is supposed to be the referral centre for northeastern Ontario. Here's what the doctors are saying.

Dr John Fenton states that we are severely underserved in areas, including emergency medicine, pediatrics, neurology, thoracic surgery and psychiatry. Dr Wayne Lambert says that in the last year and a half we have lost 16 physicians. Dr David Boyle, chief of staff, points out that we simply do not have the resources to cover this shortage.

Implementing the seven recommendations found in the northern doctors' study entitled *From Crisis to Stability* will avoid a monumental crisis in health care in the north.

This Friday the chiefs of staff from the major northern hospitals are holding an emergency meeting and they're looking for the minister or the deputy minister to attend. Our doctors have the unanimous support of northerners as they request that you, Minister, or your deputy commit to coming to this meeting and bringing your resources with you.

As Dr Boyle states, we are talking about a lack of appropriate health care for the one million people living in northern Ontario. Everyone in Ontario should have the

same access to quality health care, regardless of where they live. Minister, my community awaits your decision. Please attend this meeting.

ROBERT BALDWIN

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): This Friday is the anniversary of Robert Baldwin's birthday. The Honourable Robert Baldwin was a prominent lawyer, political leader and co-Premier of the United Province of Canada in the 19th century.

Many historians and political scientists recognize Robert Baldwin for his role in democratic reform. He developed and promoted the concept of responsible government for Upper Canada and envisioned an executive council that would be accountable to an elected legislature. This vision of responsible government became a reality in the 1840s and remains our system of government today.

Baldwin was also active in the reform of local government. He passed the Baldwin Act in 1849, allowing for the incorporation of municipalities, each having an elected council.

Because of Robert Baldwin's enduring contribution to public life in Ontario and given the lack of public recognition for what he accomplished, it is fitting to designate May 12 each year as Robert Baldwin Day. That is why later this afternoon I'll be introducing a private member's bill to do just that. A day in his name not only provides the respect he deserves, but it gives Ontarians a reason to remember our political history and gain a better understanding of who we are, where we came from and why our world has turned out as it has.

I'm requesting your support for this initiative because it will provide Ontarians with an important link to our distinguished past.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I've been informed by the clerks' table that although this is a historic occasion, a bill being reported from committee after first reading, not having had second reading yet, I'm not allowed to comment on that.

I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 33, An Act to require fair dealing between parties to franchise agreements, to ensure that franchisees have the right to associate and to impose disclosure obligations on franchisors / *Projet de loi 33, Loi obligeant les parties aux contrats de franchisage à agir équitablement,*

garantissant le droit d'association aux franchisés et imposant des obligations en matière de divulgation aux franchiseurs.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for second reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the ninth report of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ EN ÉDUCATION

Mrs Ecker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act to amend the Education Act to increase education quality, to improve the accountability of school boards to students, parents and taxpayers and to enhance students' school experience / Projet de loi 74, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation pour rehausser la qualité de l'éducation, accroître la responsabilité des conseils scolaires devant les élèves, les parents et les contribuables et enrichir l'expérience scolaire des élèves.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1349 to 1354.

The Speaker: Order. Would the members take their seats, please.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael D.
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank
Dunlop, Garfield	Marland, Margaret
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart
Flaherty, Jim	Mazzilli, Frank
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn
Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan

O'Toole, John
Palladini, Al
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Snobelen, John
Spina, Joseph
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Cleary, John C.	Kennedy, Gerard
Bartolucci, Rick	Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Bisson, Gilles	Conway, Sean G.	Lankin, Frances
Boyer, Claudette	Crozier, Bruce	Levac, David
Bradley, James J.	Di Cocco, Caroline	Marchese, Rosario
Brown, Michael A.	Dombrowsky, Leona	Martin, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Caplan, David	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Christopherson, David	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 46; the nays are 30.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ROBERT BALDWIN DAY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE JOUR DE ROBERT BALDWIN

Mr Galt moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to proclaim Robert Baldwin Day / Projet de loi 75, Loi proclamant le Jour de Robert Baldwin.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member, for a short statement.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): In recognition of the tremendous contribution Robert Baldwin made to responsible government, which by the way resulted in the Act of Union and the Baldwin Act, this bill will proclaim May 12 each year as Robert Baldwin Day.

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): Parents have told us that we need to provide more direction to Ontario's publicly funded school system to ensure that students come first. They want school boards to be accountable for delivering the benefits of Ontario's education reforms to their children. The legislation I have introduced today, the Education Accountability Act, will amend the Education Act to respond to those requests. It will keep this province firmly on the path towards the quality education we all want for Ontario's children.

From the beginning, our education reform agenda has aimed at ensuring that Ontario's students have access to the best quality education. The key elements of education reform—fair, student-focused funding; more resources in classrooms; new, more rigorous curricula; regular tests to show how our students are doing; standard report cards—have all been investments in quality. Initiatives such as

the code of conduct and a teacher testing program are also key parts of our quality agenda.

Greater accountability for school boards will strengthen these quality initiatives and ensure that their benefits reach the students of this province.

The proposed amendments, if passed, would require school boards to ensure that their secondary school teachers are meeting provincial standards for time spent teaching in the classroom. In 1998, we set province-wide standards for instructional time based on the national average. For secondary teachers, the standard was an average of four hours and 10 minutes of instructional time a day for a total of 1,250 minutes a week. We have seen that in some cases the standard has not been met and there has been uncertainty about what teaching duties the standard includes. This has not been an issue in elementary schools.

The amendments we propose today would maintain the standard while providing the clarity requested by both school boards and teachers, and ensure that boards and teacher unions meet the government's requirements on teaching time for secondary school teachers. The amendments would restate, not increase, the instructional time standard of four hours and 10 minutes a day for secondary teachers in terms of credit courses. Each school board would be required to ensure that, on average, full-time secondary teachers are assigned to teach 6.67 credit or credit-equivalent courses a year. Credit-equivalent courses or programs would include remedial instruction as well as special education and other very important programs for our students.

We are not asking teachers to do more than meet the standard set two years ago, and we are investing in this standard to ensure that it is implemented to benefit students. Last March, we announced almost \$90 million in additional funding to support extra remedial help for high school students. That's very much good news for those students and their parents.

The learning that takes place during the regular school day, also called the instructional day, is one part of a quality school program. Many other aspects of school life contribute to a good education. Outside their regular classes, students participate in a wide range of sports, arts and cultural activities. Teachers are also involved in many other important activities, such as parent-teacher interviews, staff meetings and school functions that also contribute to a quality school experience. Many teachers undertake these activities because they care about their students and because they regard them as part of the job.

Parents know these activities are not an extra. From soccer to drama to curriculum night, they enrich the participation of both students and parents in the life of the school. They are an important part of a student's education. Parents expect these opportunities to be available, and teachers have often said that making these opportunities available to students is an important part of their professional responsibilities.

When we introduced provincial standards for instructional time in 1998, teachers reminded us that co-instructional

activities were an important part of both their professional and school life, and that their day consists of more than just the time they spend in the classroom. But we have seen some teachers' unions hold students and parents hostage by threatening to withdraw or actually withdrawing their participation in these activities in high schools.

Parents do not consider this acceptable and we agree. We are therefore proposing amendments that would recognize all of these programs under the title of co-instructional activities, and we will require that school boards make sure they can provide them.

Within this board framework, principals will have the responsibility to plan and implement a co-instructional program on a school basis, with input from the parents on the school council. They would have the authority to assign teachers to these activities, if required.

These amendments, if passed, will ensure that students and parents continue to benefit from teacher participation in a full school program. For all school boards, these changes will help to ensure that their students get the most out of their school experience.

The amendments will also enhance the province's authority to uphold quality education standards. Parents and taxpayers expect publicly funded school boards to meet their obligations to deliver quality education, to meet provincial standards and to manage their finances responsibly.

This government agrees. We are therefore proposing to provide the authority to investigate the affairs of a school board where there is concern about compliance with the board's legal and educational responsibilities. Where necessary, there will also be the authority to ensure that those standards are met.

In 1998, our government ended a province-wide trend to increasing average class sizes. We set clear provincial standards for maximum average class size: 25 at the elementary level, 22 at the secondary. We ended the practice of some school boards and some teacher unions negotiating increases in class size as part of their contract bargaining. Now we are taking the next step and lowering class size for children in the earliest years of their education and in the challenging high school years.

The Education Accountability Act, if approved by this Legislature, will establish a maximum average class size of 24 students to each teacher in primary classes—junior kindergarten to grade 3—and a maximum average class size of 24.5 students for the elementary level overall.

As announced in the Ontario budget, the government is providing an additional \$101 million a year in permanent funding to support smaller classes in the elementary panel.

I am also pleased to inform members of the House that the government is committing a further \$162 million to reduce maximum average class size at the secondary level to 21 students to each teacher.

In closing, I would like to thank the staff in my ministry who have worked so hard and diligently to prepare these amendments. I would also like to thank the many

individuals in the education sector whose advice has been extremely helpful in this regard.

I am confident that these proposed amendments are good for our education system. They signal this government's firm and continuing commitment to achieve the promise of education reform for Ontario's students. I invite all members to join me in supporting this bill.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): We have heard a charade perpetrated by the Minister of Education today. We have heard from her the contrary of what most Ontarians hold as important for public education to be conducted in this province. Instead of treating teachers as professionals, we hear something different. Instead of saying to communities, "You can control your education," we hear a Soviet-style approach to taking control of education.

What parents and kids out there wanted to hear from this government—this government looked out on the land and saw—

Interjections.

1410

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member take his seat. Stop the clock. Order. I think it was about—I hate to do this—five seconds, if we could on that. Sorry for the interruption.

Mr Kennedy: Thank you, Speaker.

I can understand why the government would be sensitive, because they're all perpetrating this. This is about money. This is about a government that has reduced its share of funding for education in this province by \$1.6 billion, and every one of the members opposite has been complicit in that.

We have today not just an attack on teachers but an attack on public education. They looked out on the land and saw 70 out of 72 boards and teachers' federations prepared to have arrangements to make sure that kids could get a good education next year, and that didn't satisfy this government. They wanted instead to disrupt what's happening in schools, because if public education does well, the agenda of this government does not.

They are exporting the Durham formula. There are two boards—they happen to be in the minister's riding—where the arrangements with the boards and the teachers do not work, where there are overstressed teachers, where there are arrangements that are not working, and that very formula, with the minister's announcement today, is proposed to become the law of the land. With the Durham formula comes the Durham disease, comes the approach of this government to divide and separate the people who have the kids' interests at heart. Instead of letting them focus on kids, they want to create this fight.

I say to the people of Ontario out there, don't be fooled. The \$1.6 billion they've taken away is what this government has to stand accountable for. Instead, what they should be providing is the funding and the support to the individual communities to be able to make arrangements. This is a phony war that the government has arranged for. It is going to increase, for example, the

ratio of students to teachers. In other words, we will have fewer teachers and more students. That's what this bill does. What this bill does is talk, in a very phony way, about accountability for everybody in the school system, but not for the government.

What we really need is a code of conduct for Mike Harris and Janet Ecker and for all the rest of this government, because what they are doing is proposing to take away the discretion from principals, take away the discretion from individual teachers, take away the ability of boards to provide for the best interests of the kids in the best way they know how. This is a government reaching into communities and upsetting perhaps even contracts that have already been signed, upsetting long-standing arrangements around extracurricular activities, upsetting things that work in the interests of kids. Why? Because this government wants to take more money out of the education system. We caught them with their hand in the cookie jar. Until today this government was removing a further \$176 million this year. They now say they're going to put a little bit of that back. I refuse to be appreciative of a government that has already robbed the education system of the ability to create the quality it really requires.

This government has not at any time put the interests of kids first. They have done everything they can to upset the teaching profession. The biggest issue facing the quality of teaching today is the morale of teachers, who year after year have had attacks by this government, and those attacks form one singular purpose: They are there to distract from this government's real agenda. This governments' real agenda is to defund and destabilize the public education system, to tilt us towards, I'm afraid, charter schools, vouchers, the kinds of things that the ideologues in the Canadian Alliance opposite really believe in.

If this minister, who perpetrates this charade on behalf of the rest of their caucus, really believes in public education, she wouldn't be attacking teachers, she wouldn't be taking away their ability to do anything except strike in the face of being able to come up with arrangements that are good for them.

If she's really not afraid of what parents want from her, which is for her to be accountable herself for what she's doing to education, then she'll make sure this charade is brought to public hearings. We'll see the figures and the points they want to bring in the light of day, because they simply can't survive that kind of scrutiny.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I want people across Ontario to know what is—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We'll start the clock back at five. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Last time. Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member from Hamilton East, come to order, please. Now the leader of the third party. He has

five minutes. It's now his time to speak, and I apologize for the interruption. Start the clock at five minutes.

Mr Hampton: I want parents and mostly students across Ontario to know what's really going on here. The reality is that boards and teachers across this province negotiated agreements whereby teachers would spend time in the classroom, fulfil their duties, and also make available on a scheduled basis remedial time for students who need and want extra help.

This government is going to override that. This government is going to override scheduled periods of remedial time by teachers. Why? Because what is more important to this government is to get more teachers out of the schools. By creating a longer instructional day this government knows it can get another 1,000 to 1,500 teachers out of the schools. It is all about having fewer teachers teaching more students—that's what it's all about—and when you have fewer teachers teaching more students, it means the Harris government can come along and scoop out another \$600 million or \$700 million to finance yet more tax cuts for your well off friends. That is what is really going on here.

But that creates another problem. If you're going to continue to lengthen the school day, it means teachers are not going to have the time to engage in extracurricular activities. They won't have the same amount of time for coaching or for the band or for drama or for the chess club. They know that's going to create a problem. The government tried these tactics in the minister's own riding, in Durham, and it didn't work. It has blown up in their face.

So now they come along and they say: "We're going to legislate. We're going to command extracurricular activities." That isn't going to work either. I cited the case of Ken MacKay, someone who has been coaching in the school system for over two decades, an incredibly successful baseball coach who's been acknowledged across the province. He said: "I do this willingly. I do it because I want to give to the kids, I want to contribute. But if some hammerheaded, ham-fisted government is going to come along and try to order me to do it, command me to do it, then I'm not doing it. You can order me to do some kind of extracurricular activity. Perhaps I'll coach the chess club. Perhaps I'll take the home ec club. But I am not going to devote my energy, my creativity, my dedication to a government that doesn't respect me, a government that believes it can command these sorts of activities."

I want to say to the government: Yes, you may get your \$600 million or \$700 million out of this, but you are not going to create better schools and a better learning environment for our students. You're not. In fact, this is going to be a province-wide disaster. People who go out there on weekends, after school, at noon hour, before school, to coach, to contribute to the school band, to the school choir, to the drama club, are not going to give of themselves when you try to command.

With the crumbling of the Iron Curtain, I thought most governments realized that a command economy and a

command style of government doesn't work. Obviously you haven't learned that. You still believe that you can somehow command behaviour from people. This is not going to work. This is going to be a disaster.

I say to you as well that this pathetic attempt to cover it up by saying you're going to make available another \$160 million is nothing more than that. It is a pathetic attempt to cover up the fact that with the other hand, you're going to lay off teachers and you're going to take money out of the schools. People are on to you. This is going to be a disaster, and I'm sorry to see this kind of day in Ontario education.

DEFERRED VOTES

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY), 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (INDUSTRIE DE LA CONSTRUCTION)

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 69, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 in relation to the construction industry / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui a trait à l'industrie de la construction.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1420 to 1425.

The Speaker: Order. Would the members take their seats, please.

Mr Stockwell has moved second reading of Bill 69, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 in relation to the construction industry.

All those in favour will please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Harris, Michael D.	Palladini, Al
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chrs	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chns
Dunlop, Garfield	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Young, David
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	
Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario
Bisson, Gilles	Di Cocco, Caroline	Martin, Tony
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	McGuinty, Dalton
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Cleary, John C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Lankin, Frances	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 49; the nays are 35.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Minister of Labour.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Referred to the justice and social policy committee.

The Speaker: So referred.

SPECIAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Before proceeding to oral questions, I have received a point of privilege from the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise in accordance with section 21(c) of the standing orders to raise a point of privilege that I consider a serious one, and I beg the indulgence of the House to make my case quickly.

The case of privilege that I want to make arises from the special report to this Legislature made on the 26th day of April, 2000, by the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Dr Ann Cavoukian, concerning disclosures of personal information made by the Province of Ontario Savings Office. It will be my submission, Mr Speaker, that various officials inside the Ministry of Finance and elsewhere have perpetrated a contempt on this Legislature. Let me make my case, and I want to do it quickly.

Section 4 of the relevant statute, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, states very clearly that the Information and Privacy Commissioner is "an officer of this Legislature." I think that is an important point with which to begin. Ms Cavoukian is an officer of this Parliament, and she has a mandate from this Parliament. She is appointed on an address from this Parliament, and she has duties set out for her, or any officeholder in that position, in the legislation. So my first point is that the Information and Privacy Commissioner is clearly an officer of this Legislature.

My second point concerns contempt. What is it to be in contempt of Parliament? Let me quickly cite two references from the 22nd edition of Erskine May. Quoting from page 108 of Erskine May on contempts:

"Generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any member or officer of such House in the discharge of

his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence."

I think it's pretty clear what the authority is indicating in that case.

On page 125 of Erskine May, 22nd edition, under the subtitle "Obstructing Officers of Either House," I read "It is a contempt to obstruct or molest those employed by or entrusted with the execution of the orders of either House while in the execution of their duty." Further on it is indicated, "Both Houses will treat as contempts, not only acts directly tending to obstruct their officers in the execution of their duty, but also any conduct which may tend to deter them from doing their duty..."

In the recently published House of Commons Procedure and Practice by Marleau and Montpetit it is similarly affirmed that it is a contempt of Parliament to stand in the way of an officer of Parliament who is doing his or her duty. Let me cite one reference from Marleau and Montpetit, page 67. This refers to a ruling of M^{me} Sauvé, who was Speaker in 1980, when she wrote: "... while our privileges are defined, contempt of the House has no limits. When new ways are found to interfere with our proceedings, so too will the House, in appropriate cases, be able to find that a contempt of the House has occurred."

That is my brief recitation of the authorities on contempt. Now to the report. I would say seriously to all members that if you haven't read the report tabled by Ms Cavoukian, dated April 26, 2000, you should do so. This is a very serious matter. We were talking earlier today about accountability and responsibility. I'm not going to recite, because it would be improper for me to do so, all that is in this report. Let me quickly highlight what she tells this Parliament.

She cites a situation that occurred in the summer of 1997, when, in the exercise of looking at privatization, the Ministry of Finance allowed the entire database of the Province of Ontario Savings Office to move from its control out into a general or public domain. Fifty thousand customers—I happen to be one—of POSO had their names, addresses, phone numbers, accounts, account balances and social insurance numbers just dumped over the fence. As the commissioner points out, the private sector players in this—CIBC Wood Gundy and Angus Reid—deserve a great deal of credit because their behaviour throughout the piece in the private sector was always better by far than our behaviour as government.

What does the commissioner conclude in her report? She concludes three things. The information that was released was "personal information" under the act, it shouldn't have been released and, if released, represented a breach of the law. She says that clearly on page 25. She says as well that the Ministry of Finance and other government officials, to use her words, did not take "reasonable measures" to protect the confidentiality of that material. Those are her findings on page 25.

That is not my primary concern, although it ought to be a real concern to all honourable members. I repeat:

Remember what has happened here. For whatever good or bad reasons, 50,000 citizens had confidential personal and financial information of theirs released by government, according to this agent or officer of Parliament, improperly and illegally. That happened in the summer of 1997.

When earlier this year the Globe and Mail newspaper reported these events, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, our agent, our officer, undertook an investigation—and this is the critical point that I believe we have to, with your guidance, Mr Speaker, deliberate and take action upon. In this report, the commissioner details in an addendum six or seven pages of the frustration and, I would say, obstruction she encountered this year when she was undertaking her investigation. I'm going to very briefly cite three or four of those frustrations.

Reading from her addendum entitled "Obstacles We Encountered During this Investigation," the commissioner, our agent, says, having been promised co-operation by the Deputy Minister of Finance, they were given much less than co-operation: "We were not given any reason for the government's reticence in this particular case, unlike other cases. This was the source of some concern, given our past experience in similar matters where the full co-operation of the government had been immediately forthcoming." She notes, in this case, a significant departure from her past experiences with the government.

She says further on, and I mentioned this a moment ago, "It is interesting to note that of all the private sector organizations involved in this matter co-operated with us fully and immediately." That was the private sector. She tells us through chapter and verse that our government did not do nearly as well.

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She points out an extraordinary situation that I gather has not happened to her before. She says: "Some documents," in this matter, "sent to us were partially blacked out or 'severed,' even though the ministry"—in this case finance—"is well aware of the fact that we routinely review highly sensitive unsevered documents and are bound by a statutory duty of confidence. Not only was this highly out of the ordinary, but in our view, disrespectful of the mandate of this office."

I repeat: Our officer, this Legislature's Information and Privacy Commissioner, is telling us that in her investigation of this serious matter she was treated in a way that she felt was unusual, extraordinary and "disrespectful of the mandate of this office." That means disrespectful of the people who employ her—us; you and all of the rest of us who constitute this Legislative Assembly. I'm coming to the conclusion.

Interjections.

Mr Conway: There should be no laughter. There should be absolutely no laughter. I raise this because in my 25 years I can't recall an officer of Parliament reporting to Parliament in such clear terms that her duties, her inquiry was frustrated and obstructed on a matter of real public interest, important, and we are told by her, illegal

conduct. According to the commissioner, the law was broken. In this exercise she was never able to interview anyone from the privatization secretariat. She was not able to interview Tony Salerno, known to many of us as a distinguished public servant. He is over at the Ontario Financing Authority. They had significant responsibility. He was not willing or allowed to speak to our officer.

We talk about accountability; we talk about responsibility. This is our officer. She is doing our work, and this is her report to us. I repeat: 50,000 account holders at the Province of Ontario Savings Office had their confidential financial and personal information dumped over the fence in an illegal way by their government, and the head of the Ontario Financing Authority won't go and give an accounting of what was done by himself and his officials in this matter.

I submit to you, Mr Speaker, that that does constitute a prima facie case of contempt. I submit these matters to you for your urgent and serious consideration, and should you agree with me that there is a prima facie case of contempt, I tell you and my colleagues in the House today that I will be expecting, in that event, that this important matter will be taken up on a priority basis by the Legislative Assembly committee.

The Speaker: I thank the member for his point of privilege and also for the notice that was given. The government House leader on the same point of privilege?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, in that I did not have notice that this point of privilege was going to be made, I would like to reserve the opportunity to make submissions to you in writing. However, I will say this: I would suspect that many of the precedents on which the member opposite relies probably related to members' privileges, as opposed to a servant of the Legislature, and I'm not certain—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I listened very quietly. It's not like a situation with health care or the environment, where there are some differences of opinion here. I need to hear it. I need to do it in total silence, no heckling. The other side did that, and I would appreciate it by both sides. This is not a partisan issue. I need to hear very clearly both sides of the argument. Your member had an extended period of time and did a very good job explaining it. I need the same co-operation for the government House leader, please.

Hon Mr Sterling: Therefore, the references and the evolution of those references and the reasons for the rulings made by speakers before probably emanated out of a breach of privilege or a threatened breach of privilege of members of the House of Commons or a legislature somewhere in the British parliamentary system.

Number two is that the assumption that there has been something done illegal has never been proven in a court. In fact Dr Cavoukian says that something was done illegal, that may be her opinion. But there may be other opinions as well as to whether or not there was something done illegal. It is for a court to decide whether or

not there has been a legal or an illegal activity undertaken by someone.

Also, I understand and I would like to put forward perhaps another point of view from the Deputy Minister of Finance as to whether or not there was co-operation. Therefore, Mr Speaker, I would like to reserve the opportunity to submit to you my arguments in a fuller sense in writing since I was not given notice of this point of privilege before it was brought up.

The Speaker: I thank the government House leader and I will look at any submissions. The member for Hamilton West on the same point of privilege?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I want to support the question of breach of privilege that has been raised by the member from Renfrew. As you will know, we raised that in this House—I raised it, my leader raised it in lead-off questions the day this report was actually tabled—and really didn't get much of a commitment at all from the government on a matter that is indeed very serious. The only thing that could be more serious in terms of personal information that has been given up unlawfully, at least according to the freedom of information commissioner, would be medical records. That is the only thing that could be more personal than your personal finances, and yet the freedom of information commissioner has taken the unprecedented stand, and says so in her report, she has taken the extraordinary step of listing a number of the questions that were not answered and that remain unanswered as to whether or not this is a question of privilege. Given the fact that it is an officer of this Legislature acting on behalf of the Legislature, when that officer is obstructed and denied access to the information that she needs to carry out the request of this place, indeed collectively we have had our rights breached, but individually, if they're collectively breached, they have to have been breached individually.

There may even be an element of criminality involved here, and we may ultimately see the police brought in because, according to the commissioner, laws were broken.

The government says they want to get to the bottom of this, and I'm sure you'll hear that in the written submission you'll receive from the government House leader. But the fact is that we offered to give unanimous consent to immediately pass legislation that would give the commissioner the final powers and authority she seeks in order to get answers to all the questions she outlines. You will know it's very rare for an officer of the Legislature to actually state that they feel they've been obstructed and to actually outline the questions they believe still need to be answered in order to comply with their duties, which in this case are to review matters of a privacy nature that are raised by members, individually or collectively, in this House.

I would urge you to please give every serious consideration to the issues that have been raised by my friend from Renfrew, up to and including whether you would deem the breach to be so serious, given that the commissioner states that laws were broken, whether or not it's in the interests of this Legislature for our Speaker

to call in the police and have a criminal investigation in addition to the one the commissioner has undertaken on our behalf. I urge you to take this with the utmost seriousness, because we certainly do.

The Speaker: I thank the House leader for the third party as well and can give the member the assurance that I will take it very seriously. I thank the member again for raising the point of privilege and I thank the government House leader. I will reserve my judgment. I thank all members for their participation here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question today is for the Premier. I believe in open and honest government. That's why we've been working so hard to get to the bottom of your land scandal. Premier, we know that we're getting particularly close now because of the extensive damage control that has kicked into high gear as of yesterday.

For weeks you've told us that you can't comment, and your minister has told us that he can't comment on this matter; you told us that the ORC officials can't comment on this matter because the auditor has instructed you not to comment. But then yesterday the ORC sent around some so-called fact sheets to reporters containing certain carefully chosen and selected details in connection with some of the deals which I've raised in this matter in this House with you.

Premier, tell us which it is: Are you refusing to follow the advice of the auditor or were you really, as we have suspected all along, free to comment on this matter and you were just using the auditor as a shield to hide behind?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The only thing I saw that happened yesterday was that you raised a case, and then I read that the Globe and Mail says they investigated that case and the facts they presented were entirely different from the facts you presented. The Globe and Mail also indicated, according to the article I read, that the deal was a good deal for the taxpayers. So the only thing that has happened between yesterday and today is that all the facts you presented yesterday were debunked.

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Mr McGuinty: Premier, I got the sheets put out by the ORC yesterday and I read them very carefully. I looked for the seal of approval from the OPP anti-racket squad, which is presently conducting an investigation at the ORC, and I looked for the seal of approval from the independent auditor, who is presently conducting an audit of all activities at the ORC, and none of these seals of approval were there. Until they are there, these matters remain shady deals and you remain the author of this misfortune.

I will ask you again: Now that we know the ORC is willing to release information, let's see it release all of the information. Will you now undertake to release all of the documents, all of the memos, all of the letters associated with all of the deals we have raised in this House in connection with land flips? Will you undertake to do that now, Premier? Now that we know the jig is up and you're prepared to put forward information through the ORC, will you do that?

Hon Mr Harris: To the best of my knowledge—I know I didn't, my office didn't—I don't think the minister or the minister's office has talked to the ORC at all about what's released. It's up to them. If there is a matter that is not under investigation, if there is a matter not being reviewed by the auditors, if there is a matter not being reviewed by the OPP, then I would assume that they would go ahead and make that information public, particularly to correct the record when the information you presented was factually incorrect.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, I can see why you're not up to speed. If you only work one day a week, it's pretty hard to stay up to speed on this stuff.

Let me tell you what the ORC recently said.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Member take his seat. The member will know that when you say something controversial, it is going to strike a reaction and it's difficult to then maintain order. I would ask the member to try and be careful in choosing his words. Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, I have a—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Take his seat. Stop the clock. I have said that. Now I say to the government members, in situations like this, I have warned the member; I don't need you yelling at him when he's trying to ask the question. I give all members a warning. I can see that this day is going to start off very controversial because of what's happened and I will tell all members that I'm going to be very quick to name people today. You're all on warning. To everybody in this House today, there are going to be no more warnings for anybody. If I have to stand up, I'm going to name people today. We have controversial subjects on the table today and the House is starting off, I think, in a very aggressive manner. I'm going to be very quick to name people and I want everybody to know that.

Start the clock. Final supplementary, leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you should be aware that there was a letter sent to your minister Chris Hodgson on March 21. It came from Joe Mavrinac, chairman of the board of directors. In it he says to the minister, "You are aware of the auditor's request that details of previous ORC sales not be released publicly as it could prejudice his review." So what we've got now is you telling us you can't provide us with any information because it would be wrong to do so, but now you're saying it is OK for the ORC to provide us with that information. Yet we have a

letter here from the ORC saying they're not allowed to provide that information.

Premier, back to you one more time, because it seems to me that ultimately in all of these matters the buck stops with you: Why don't you begin to release all of the facts that are connected with all of these deals? Surely we can get away from this death by a thousand cuts. Why don't you release all of the information in connection with all these deals and undertake to do that right now?

Hon Mr Harris: I certainly did not, nor did the minister, release any information on anything yesterday or on any of these. It's up to the ORC. As you know, they have notified the minister that if something is under investigation, he is not to release any information he may have. I've got to tell you that every member is free to ask questions. The member sitting beside you told the minister he'd like to meet with the ORC. The minister called, arranged that and he refused to meet. The fact is, you don't want the facts. You don't want the information. There is a lot of information that is available on a number of these that can be released. The ORC will be the ones, in conjunction with the auditors and the OPP, who will decide that.

When I look at the information you present, totally contrary, as we found in the papers today from those who had actually looked at it, to the information that is factually correct, I have to say this: I think your father would be embarrassed to see you stand here day after day in the gutter ruining the reputation of your father and your—

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. I would appreciate if the Premier, in situations like this—I just finished warning the other side, and I said that situations like that are totally uncalled for. I must say, Premier, in order to keep this House in order, it would be helpful if we didn't refer to situations like that of a personal nature. I have warned the Premier before and I would ask him to think before he says something that could be considered controversial in the House. I would ask the Premier if he would please withdraw that remark.

Hon Mr Harris: Mr Speaker, if you object to me referencing what I feel his father would think, I'd be happy to withdraw it. I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. When we're doing withdrawals, we can't get into long detail. Either you withdraw it or you do not. Because somebody was yelling, I missed it. I would ask the Premier to withdraw it, and just withdraw it. And I will say this, because I did the same thing to the Minister of Education yesterday: You can't go into long detail. Either you withdraw it clearly and without giving a long discussion or, I must warn the Premier, just like I said to the Minister of Education, I will have to name him if he does not withdraw it.

Hon Mr Harris: Yes. I said I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr McGuinty: The second question is for the Premier. Premier, for the past month, I've been asking you to fire the Chair of Management Board while the

police investigate this matter. Instead, you have let him twist in the wind, the same way you did to Steve Gilchrist. Worse, you have left him in a position to preside over investigations. This minister is incapable of getting to the bottom of this scandal because I believe he is at the bottom of this scandal.

Here's what we know. You promised during the course of the campaign to sell off taxpayer lands. After the election, you directed ORC officials to sell off taxpayer lands. We know this minister attends board meetings. We know that major political contributors to your party have made millions of dollars through land flips. Premier, why have you refused to fire this minister who is responsible for what's going on at the ORC today in Ontario?

Hon Mr Harris: I'm surprised to hear the member stand in his place and say he believes the minister is at the bottom of the scandal when there's not a shred of evidence to support any of that. I would be surprised if he would stand outside and say anything factually that that is the case. I know here in the confines of this room you seem to—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Premier take his seat. I warned the member for London-Fanshawe. It was him that I did before. I have no alternative. I warned you and I said I'd be quick. You can't be shouting, and I say to any other members who are yelling while I'm doing this, they will be named as well. We can't continue to have that. I explained the situation. I have no alternative but to name the member for London-Fanshawe and ask that he leave the chamber.

Mr Mazzilli left the chamber.

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The Speaker: Before we begin, I will clarify again. I've said on a number of occasions that heckling is a part of this place and I understand that. Sorry, the clock is stopped and we'll go back and add some time on that. I've often used the reference of two sides of the House: The member for St Catharines and the Minister of Labour will do some heckling. They're short. They don't continue on. They don't talk over people. They get their points across on both sides of the House. That's acceptable.

What is not acceptable is when somebody gets up and shouts, or the slogans being shouted are just continually repeated. Heckling is a part of this place, but we can't continue when we have situations where we shout across at each other, because clearly the alternative is that I stand up here and the clock ticks down for a whole hour and there will be no questions. What happens is there may be some members doing that and there are some members on both sides, back benches and front benches, who do want to ask some questions. We are going to try and maintain order in here. I would appreciate the co-operation of all of the members. This is obviously a difficult day and I would ask, if I may, the leadership on both sides to take the lead on this with their members.

The Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: As I indicated, I am surprised that you would make this unfounded allegation today. Because a number of deals have been questioned, the minister himself has called in and supported the board of the ORC in having an audit team in, and also having the OPP in, on the advice of the Deputy Attorney General, to take a look at transactions by this arm's-length agency. That is entirely appropriate. The minister is doing his job as he ought to do it and I encourage you to do yours as you ought to do it.

Mr McGuinty: Don't worry about me doing my job, Premier. I will continue to do it day in and day out, and one of my responsibilities is to get to the bottom of your land scandal.

Premier, you still refuse to acknowledge how serious a matter this is. If you take a look at the most recent court document filed in connection with this matter, it says, "There is now compelling evidence that ORC staff have received secret commissions, bribes or other benefits in connection with frauds." The court documents filed a little while back talk about compelling evidence of bid-rigging in which certain employees of the ORC participated. It talks about fraudulent bidding. It talks about no legitimate competition for contracts. It talks about fraudulent invoicing. It talks about kickbacks. It talks on and on about dirty deals that are happening at the ORC. Do you know what it says as well? We also know that your Blueprint specifically promised that you were going to force a sell-off of taxpayer lands in Ontario.

You lent direction to what's going on at the ORC. You can't continue to say that what is happening over there was never prompted by you and that you have nothing whatsoever to do with it. At the end of the day, it's this minister who must take responsibility for that. I ask you one more time to do the right thing and the honourable thing, at least pending this investigation, and fire this guy.

Hon Mr Harris: The litany of allegations are just that—allegations. None of them includes the minister. None includes the chair of the ORC. None of them includes me. That is why I think the minister, quite properly, should be in his place trying to get to the bottom of these allegations that go back even to your administration.

Mr McGuinty: There's no doubt about it as far as you're concerned: You, the minister and everybody at the ORC should be canonized. They should all be formally declared saints for everything they've done in this connection.

Your platform speaks for itself. It tells us who is responsible. It tells us who was driving this sell-off of taxpayer lands in Ontario. You wanted to sell off those taxpayer lands. You gave clear marching orders to the ORC to sell, sell, sell. You failed to put in place proper controls to protect things like appraisals, tenders and mortgages. You let fraud, kickbacks and bid-rigging rule the roost over at the ORC. You appointed the board of directors. Your minister attends board meetings. Your contributors have made millions of dollars on this stuff.

You are responsible for the scandal at the ORC. Will you now take responsibility by firing this minister?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me respond to the class act of allegations that this member will not repeat outside the House and say this: The case that he raised yesterday turned out to be totally different than the facts that were presented by the member yesterday. What we had yesterday was a piece of land that I understand—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Harris: Because I actually trust the Globe and Mail more than I do your facts. The Globe and Mail indicated that this was a piece of property that the ORC had been directed by the government to sell under the Liberals. They couldn't sell it. It was a piece of property that had been directed to be sold by the NDP. They couldn't sell it. It was a piece of property that couldn't be sold over a period of 10 years. Did we want the piece of property sold, as you did? Yes, and the piece of property was sold, according to the Globe and Mail, at good value for the taxpayers.

So the facts of the matter are, you will make allegations and statements in here that you won't repeat outside only because you have privilege in here to say whatever you want. I don't think that's becoming a member of the Legislature. That's my opinion.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Last year, doctors from across northeastern Ontario gave your government two reports warning of an inevitable crisis unless your government took immediate steps to deal with the shortage of doctors. These physicians from North Bay, Sudbury and Timmins put together a number of proposed solutions, but regrettably your government has ignored them all.

Now, as of June 1, another six doctors will be leaving the Sudbury region—five specialists and one family doctor. Since January 1999, 15 doctors have left what is in effect the health centre for northeastern Ontario. But these latest gaps can't be filled: a radiation oncologist; emergency room physicians; the only full-time thoracic surgeon; the only full-time neurosurgeon. We know from experience that it becomes harder and harder to recruit as more doctors leave, because the people you're trying to recruit say, "I don't want to be alone," or "I don't want to be overworked."

Premier, you had warning of this crisis. You had solutions proposed to your government. You ignored them. What are you going to do now about this crisis that has occurred under your Minister of Health?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): First of all, I'm surprised that the member would raise this issue, given that during the current round of negotiations with the OMA, when a number of initiatives were worked out with the OMA—and that deal is still subject to ratification. But we all know this member's record. He opposed it; he doesn't want us to encourage doctors; he

doesn't want us to pay doctors more money to go into the north.

Apparently, he's opposed to the \$90 million we brought forward for 85 small and rural hospitals to improve access to physicians and emergency rooms. I suppose he's opposed to \$10 million for 106 new nurse practitioners for rural and northern communities. I suppose he's opposed to \$79 million to enhance community-based mental health services. I suppose he's opposed to the six community development officer programs to assist with recruitment. I suppose he's opposed to the initiatives in the budget to do all these things, all over on top of what his government's abysmal record was: an inability to attract doctors to the north.

Mr Hampton: Premier, this shortage of physicians is occurring under your government, and it's gotten worse in each progressive year. As for your agreement with the Ontario Medical Association, in that agreement you actually did away with the provision that said that doctors who located in overserved areas wouldn't be entitled to full billing. In other words, your agreement actually makes it more attractive for doctors to move into over-supplied areas, which puts undersupplied and under-served areas at greater difficulty. Your budget says you're going to pay for tuition fees for medical school students who want to return to the north, but everybody in northern Ontario knows that's not going to produce anything for seven years, if it produces anything then.

As far as anything else in your OMA agreement, all you've agreed to is another study. All of these things don't address the issue. The effect of the crisis in Sudbury is going to be felt across northeastern Ontario, because the waiting lists are going to become ever more unreasonable for specialists, for family doctors and in the emergency room. There are going to be more and more referrals to southern Ontario, which are going to cost more money.

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Premier, these physicians wanted to work with your government. They put forward a number of solutions. They made two reports to your government, and your government hasn't acted on any of them. In fact, you've done the reverse. What are you going to do to deal with this doctor shortage—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: He's the leader of the party that slashed places in our medical schools by 10%. I'm really disappointed to hear you're now opposed to our proposal to offer free tuition to doctors to encourage them to go up into the north. However, in spite of the fact that you seem to be opposed to all of our initiatives and in spite of the fact that you failed when you were in government, let's set the record straight. We did commission a report from Dr McKendry, who consulted with a number of the communities in the north and underserved areas. He made a number of recommendations. We responded immediately to several of those: \$11 million right away to implement the short-term recommendations. We continue to work on a number of those in short-term areas. We continued

expansion of that in the budget. We committed to the doctors in Thunder Bay to give them more flexibility, because they said our program was well-intentioned, they applauded us, but we needed to keep providing more individual flexibility. Yes, those are short-term; yes, it's not perfect; yes, we have more to do. I'm just disappointed that you oppose some of the longer-term solutions such as free tuition. I think that's disgraceful, when you're the government that slashed places for doctors in our medical schools.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): Premier, I'm glad you raised that issue. I guess we should admit that it's true: We agreed with the Mulroney government's directive, along with every other province in this country, and maybe in hindsight that wasn't the right thing to do. You can cast blame all you want, but right now there is a crisis. There's a crisis in Sudbury. They're 40 doctors short in Thunder Bay. It's not only remote or northern communities; it's other communities like Kitchener-Waterloo, Cornwall, Windsor and Niagara Falls. None of them can find enough physicians, and it's getting worse under your government's watch. Three years ago there were 100 family doctor vacancies in 68 communities; today there are 415 family doctor vacancies in 100 Ontario communities.

Right now, as a government, you have to take steps. I hear all of what you say you're going to do, but there's a crisis in Sudbury and in northeastern Ontario. Those physicians are wanting an emergency meeting. I'm asking you today, will you attend an emergency meeting with the physicians and representatives of northeastern Ontario? Failing that, if you won't, will you direct your health minister to be there? The time for talking at the civil service level is over. They need accountability from your government, either you or your minister. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Harris: As you know, I attended a meeting with doctors in northwestern Ontario. In that meeting I think I got 12 hours' notice. Actually, the doctors said, "We didn't even ask for the meeting," and I met with them. So, of course we are a government that is happy to respond, happy to meet, either me or the minister, officials who can assist.

We have a serious problem; we have a challenge. I don't know if the New Democratic Party is suggesting that we now order doctors where they are to practise. I doubt, because they wouldn't do it, that that's going to work. We have to work on programs, and we are working co-operatively. But this was the government that—through the social contract you slashed \$60 million out of psychiatric hospitals and you never put a cent into community-based mental health services. It wasn't until we came along that we put a moratorium on the closure of psychiatric hospitals, while we reinvested over \$150 million in new community spaces. Nothing closes down until we get more into community-based care. You're the government that slashed—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the Premier's time is up.

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is to the Premier—and the issue is the shortage of doctors, Premier. But I want to ask you again about the Ontario Realty Corp. Two weeks ago, my colleague from Sault Ste Marie asked the Chair of Management Board table in the Legislature the names of companies that currently have property under contract with the Ontario Realty Corp. Your Chair of Management Board said that if there were no legal impediment he would do that. Surprise, surprise. Two days later his staff call up and they say that the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act prohibits them from releasing. So we called back and said, "Can you cite for us what sections prohibit you?" and we got no answer. We looked at length through the protection of privacy act to find the sections and couldn't find anything.

Premier, on the one hand, we saw yesterday that your government is willing to make information available when it suits your purpose to leak it to the media, but on the other hand, when there's a request for information that frankly ought to be out there—and we can't find any section in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act that prohibits it, and your government won't say what sections prohibit it. Can you explain to us why we seem to have these two contradictory situations?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think you heard the intervention from the member from Renfrew on privacy and on information. We treat this very seriously, as you know. We have concurred with the member that there ought to be a legislative committee take a look and to review practices, because there seems to be some disagreement of individuals, from the commissioner to people within various ministries and lawyers, over what should be released and what shouldn't. We want to comply, of course, as best we can with these areas. The details or the specifics I cannot get into. I can tell you this: We have not asked for any information not to be released nor asked for information to be released on anything to do with the ORC. There has been no political direction, certainly, given in that area. Should you wish to ask a supplementary on the specifics, the minister may have more information on that. But we treat privacy very seriously and we take these matters very seriously. We want to do the best we can, and we ask our ministries to do the same.

Mr Hampton: Premier, I hate to tell you this, but the member's point of privilege was about how your government isn't respecting the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. We see here that when we ask for information, you obliquely try to cite the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, but you won't refer to the specific sections that prohibit the disclosure of the information. But when it suits your government's spin, you're more than happy to provide the information.

The Premier says he wants to get to the bottom of this. He makes allegations that some of this may have happened under the NDP in the early 1990s or even earlier.

under the Liberals in the late 1980s. Premier, if you really want to get to the bottom of this, then I have a suggestion for you. Why not hold a public inquiry? The Supreme Court of Canada has said that you can structure a public inquiry such that it would not prejudice potential criminal charges. It would allow, for example, the auditor to come forward. It would allow for the subpoena of witnesses. It would allow those people who want to tell a different side of the story to come forward. If you truly want to get to the bottom of this and you want to stop selectively leaking information that promotes your government's spin, meanwhile shutting off other information, then let's really get to the bottom of it. I don't care if you want to go back into the early 1990s or into the late 1980s. I'm prepared to work with you on that. Let's get to the bottom of this. Let's have a public inquiry so all the information can get out there.

Hon Mr Harris: I think this is about the 96th request for a public inquiry. I think all members have been supportive of calling in the forensic auditors in support of the OPP in doing their job, and I think we ought to allow them to continue to do their job. At the end of that process, if there is still more information, we certainly would want to look, post this period, for how we would like the ORC to operate. I think you would not be shocked to think that we don't want it to operate the way it did under your government or the Liberal government or the early years of our government. We all want to get to the bottom of this.

Certainly I think it's entirely premature to suggest that alternative now, but I appreciate the member's advice which follows, I think, Mr Brennan who first made the call, and now you and he concur. At the end of this process, we'll look at any vehicle to give us proper procedures to operate in the future.

1520

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Premier. We believe that gun crimes are becoming a very serious and pressing issue here in Ontario. Yesterday Peel Regional Police acted on a serious problem by seizing 3,200 phony guns. Chief Catney was very concerned that these guns are not covered under both federal and provincial legislation. Ontario Liberals share this concern, and that's why we have put forward a bill that would make it illegal for anybody under the age of 18 to purchase a phony gun, and also would require that anybody who proposes to purchase one of these guns pass a background criminal record check. Premier, you've now had three weeks to look at this bill. Will you support our bill and call it for debate immediately, or are you just loud on crime and soft on guns?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Either the Solicitor General or Attorney General may want to get into some of the specifics, because when the bill was introduced by the member for—you can help me—

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): St Paul's.

Hon Mr Harris: —St Paul's, I applauded it as the first sign of any interest in the Liberal Party in crime, in gun control, in any of the areas that would be a meaningful effort. I appreciate that now, trying to make up for five years of inaction, the leader of the party wishes to get in on this bill. So do we. We thought it was a good initiative, a good idea. We're reviewing it. We're taking a look at it. The police obviously treat it seriously.

There is within the laws of the land the power, as you saw, to seize the guns as they did, but we're taking a look and I know it is being reviewed. It may be that we would like to go a little further, but I certainly applaud your backbench member for raising the issue. I think he is on the right track, and actually, congratulations to you for recognizing that, albeit late, and trying to get into the front of the parade that's already moving.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, we know where you and your caucus stand when it comes to the gun parade in Ontario. You've got a caucus member who is appearing on United States of America television pimping for the NRA—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I would ask the member to withdraw that, please.

Mr McGuinty: I withdraw that remark, Speaker—advocating on behalf of the National Rifle Association. We have the spectacle in our province of you, Premier, allowing the NRA to put books in our children's schools which tell them how to load, point and shoot handguns. You have yet to stand up and speak out against that development. Premier, one more time: Stop being loud on crime, start being hard on solutions. I ask you again: Will you support this bill? Will you bring it into this House so we can begin to debate it? It's a very short bill. You've had it for over three weeks now. Can we not get on with this? Our police are asking for it.

Hon Mr Harris: I'm not sure I know exactly why the leader of the Liberal Party has such a hatred for the leadership and members of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, but aside from that, let me say that we have members in our caucus who think it's a disgrace that the Liberals have wasted \$200 million or \$300 million or \$400 million—we're not sure how much yet—on a very flawed piece of legislation that doesn't meet anybody's intention of proper gun control. We, of course, would like to see those dollars channelled into other areas.

While we have caucus members who believe that, we will also soon have a caucus member who has led and championed the right for gun control, that being the future, to-be member, Priscilla de Villiers, from the great riding of Wentworth.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The people in my riding of Durham listened closely to the

budget presented in the House by Finance Minister Ernie Eves last week. In fact, they're quite grateful for the recent significant capital grant to Durham and they want to extend their thanks for that.

While I believe that my constituents on the whole were pleased with the nature of the budget and the positive steps it takes to ensure continued prosperity in the province of Ontario, some of my constituents were hoping that a plan to make Durham College a university would have been announced. I'm sure you and I have spoken of this. I know that the college president, Gary Polonsky, and the board chair, Terry Hing, were expecting that announcement.

Minister, the region is growing quickly and would be an ideal location for a new university. Can you inform the House today, and my constituents—hundreds of whom, by the way, have written me—whether a plan to create a university in Durham is on the agenda or otherwise?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I thank the member for Durham for his question and I can assure him that the members from Durham and the constituents of Durham have written me hundreds of them as well. For that, I think they should get some credit, and the credit is because this province is looking at new and innovative ways to provide quality post-secondary education for our students. I think the creative thinking that's going on around this province and in Durham is to be commended, because these are new and different times, but always times for quality and accessibility.

Durham's initial plan certainly brings forward the idea of innovation and partnership. That is something we want and support and are looking for. The honourable member will know that we announced new ways, and I'm now talking about applied degrees and private universities, and we also said at the same time that there are three goals: first of all, a quality degree; second, lots of choice for students; and third, the protection of our students. I'm looking forward to these kinds of discussions with Durham.

Mr O'Toole: I commend you—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock. Sorry to interrupt. The member for Hamilton East on a point of order.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the previous response, the Premier referred to the riding of the by-election as "the riding or whatever." I'd clarify the record: It's the riding of—

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. I have said that we would try to keep the points of order—in other Houses they don't even entertain points of order. I've done that, and if we get into that, that's what I'm going to get into and we won't get up on situations like that. I would appreciate if we didn't use the points of order to debate on all sides of the issue.

Sorry for the interruption to the member. Start the clock, please.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much, Minister, not just for that response but for the courage to think outside the traditional box on the college and universities. I commend you for that.

As I understand it, part of the proposed changes you've discussed in Ontario's post-secondary education system allows colleges to grant applied degrees. That's very imaginative and I commend you for it. Durham College currently offers, in partnership with Trent and York, a number of widely valued courses and programs, such as automated manufacturing, e-business, policing and justice, to name but a few. The college as a whole, as you know, has an exceptional record, not just for job placement but for general performance. Could you explain to this House what criteria you will be using to decide which colleges will be involved in the pilot projects? Quite sincerely, Minister, I'm looking for your assurance that Durham College will be on that list.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: The honourable member never lets up. He, once again, is supporting his great college. I think everybody knows that students and employers are increasingly looking for new combinations of skills to meet the demands of today's world of work and the rapidly changing global economy.

I accept the compliments from the member with regard to applied degrees. They are long overdue. As a matter of fact, Howard Rundle, the president and chair of ACAATO, stated: "This significant and visionary action by the government of Ontario recognizes the quality of Ontario college programming, the needs of Ontario students and the job market. Applied degrees will give students greater choice in the knowledge economy."

So, in direct response, we will be recognizing a maximum of eight pilot projects a year for three years. Each project will typically consist of one college offering one program in a field where the college demonstrates academic excellence.

1530

TEACHERS' PENSION FUND

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Chair of Management Board and has to do with the budget. We notice in the budget that the teachers' pension plan now has become a source of considerable revenue for the government. I gather that fortunately the teachers' pension plan has invested well and has very good returns on investment, and rather than an expense on teachers' pensions there's a revenue of about \$700 million, which is terrific. That is as a result of the good investments that have taken place.

My question to the minister is this: Recognizing that the stock market does tend to fluctuate, and I believe that a majority of their investments are in the stock market, how solid is that \$711-million revenue? In your judgment, can we count on \$711 million of revenue from the pension plan in this fiscal year?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The Minister of Finance's numbers

have consistently been prudent, cautious and over-achieved. I might add that his numbers have been consistent that way since 1995, and your annual report each year has always been off. So I would have trust in the budget as tabled by the Minister of Finance.

Mr Phillips: I take it, then, that the government does expect a \$711-million revenue from the teachers' pension, because it's in the budget. That is a considerable amount of revenue coming in to the government from the teachers' pension. We looked at the expenditures in the elementary and secondary—and in the post-secondary, but particularly elementary and secondary—and when you account for the replacement of the property tax cuts that you've implemented, provincial support for elementary and secondary schools has actually dropped. Why did you decide that you would not use some of that \$711 million of teachers' pension revenue coming to you to invest in elementary and secondary?

Hon Mr Hodgson: In the budget, and again in the Minister of Education's announcement today, we are investing more in our children in Ontario than at any time in our history. So that's the issue about which your misinformation campaign is not accurate. We are investing more in education and we have the numbers to prove that.

To return to your question on the pensions, the Minister of Finance's numbers have been consistently accurate. I will pass on your comments to him and he can probably get back to you with more detail. But you would be aware that there are rules around how the gains in the pension plan can be spent; also the difference between PSAAB accounting and cash accounting. There's two systems when you record it.

Mr Phillips: There aren't two books, are there?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Your government had the two books. Don't be so stupid as to try to say that. You would know the difference—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The member is going to have to withdraw that. The time's already gone down and I say to the member of the third party that his lead question, the second and third questions were well over the time limit as well. I ask the member to withdraw that.

Hon Mr Hodgson: What would you call it, Mr Speaker? I withdraw it.

The Speaker: The members can't continue to do this. You either withdraw it or you don't, the same thing that I said to the Premier.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Just a moment, please. We can't have situations where there are qualifications with the withdrawals. I believe we're on to a new question.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): My question today is for the Attorney General. Although it's not a new phenomenon, various news reports have indicated recently that organized crime appears to be growing in

the province of Ontario. Now, it's my understanding that organized crime can take many forms, that it costs our economy billions of dollars, but most troubling is that it takes advantage of our most vulnerable citizens. Minister, with all the other justice-related initiatives being put forward by our government, and I do applaud you for those, I would like to know if fighting organized crime is still a priority for you and for the ministry.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for Guelph-Wellington for the question. I would like to assure the member and all members that this government takes organized crime very seriously and that we will do everything possible to stop the expansion of organized crime in Ontario.

It is estimated that the Ontario economy loses over \$1.5 billion every year due to organized crime. Organized crime is drugs and thugs, but it's also spread to contraband, car thefts, telemarketing scams that threaten our seniors, fraud, tax evasion, money laundering and counterfeit products which hurt our economy. These corrupt organizations were responsible for over \$1.8 million in direct consumer losses last year in Ontario. Car insurance premiums, for example, have risen more than 10% since 1995 to cover theft claims, and organized criminals are infiltrating legitimate businesses with money laundering and counterfeit contraband creating unfair competition for legitimate businesses that pay taxes and are working to keep Ontario's economy strong.

Mrs Elliott: The tentacles that organized crime seems to be able to infiltrate into legitimate businesses are disturbing indeed. What I'm curious to know is if there are specific initiatives that you're undertaking in your ministry that are going to protect citizens from being attacked by this insidious business.

Hon Mr Flaherty: Last week's budget provided some \$4 million a year for new government initiatives to fight organized crime and corrupt organizations. This funding will allow my ministry to develop and implement new tools and techniques to attack criminal organizations and it will also help my colleague the Solicitor General to enhance policing in this area.

Currently we are consulting with experts to examine the tools and strategies used in other jurisdictions to fight corrupt organizations and take the profit out of organized crime. It is important that we study what works, what doesn't work, and why, in order to come up with the best solution for Ontario. Following these consultations, we hope to develop our own tools and techniques to attack corrupt organizations and take the business out of organized crime in Ontario.

EDUCATION LEGISLATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Education, and it's about today's announcement. Currently in high schools across Ontario, teachers, as I understand it, teach six of eight periods. That is, they're teaching a credit course for six

of eight periods; for two periods a day they are doing prep time, they're available for remedial instruction, they're on call or they're doing substitute supervision.

Under your announcement today, the law will now require that each teacher teaches 6.67 credit courses. In other words, the teaching day—the number of classes they're responsible for—is expanded. If each teacher is teaching more, that is, additional classes, we estimate that that will allow your government to reduce the number of teachers by at least 2,000 across Ontario at the high school level. Do you deny that your new law will reduce the number of high school teachers across the province by at least 2,000?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): First of all, the workload standard, the instructional time standard, that I introduced in the Legislature today, the 1,250 minutes a week, four hours and 10 minutes a day, or 6.67 out of eight, however you want to calculate it, is the same standard we had two years ago. Secondly, there is no question that things like on-call, which was being double-counted, we said would not be double-counted.

I would also like to remind the honourable member that each teacher is not teaching X amount. It is a board-wide average, as it should be. We recognize that teachers have different kinds of workloads, different kinds of courses, different kinds of pressures, and we believe the educational system should be able to recognize that. So we have clearly flagged that.

The final point is that we are concerned about potential job loss. That's why we propose, if this Legislature supports the legislation, to bring down the class size in secondary, and we are putting \$162 million out there to help make that happen, because we don't want to have job losses. Not only is it a benefit for OSSTF, it has the added benefit for teachers and students in the classroom of smaller class size. So we think it's an important investment in quality.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary, the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have a supplementary for Mme la Ministre with respect to the extracurricular activities. I know that what she's trying to do is to solve a political problem with the withdrawal of services. They resented the fact that teachers have done that in response to what they did to teachers, so they want to solve that political question so it never happens again.

Here is the effect, though. They want to make a voluntary activity involuntary. They will oblige teachers to do something they have done voluntarily for a long time. So here I am, a phys ed teacher with a passion to do my extracurricular activity because I love to do it, and Madame la Ministre is now going to oblige me to do it. Does Madame la Ministre think that same person who did it with love and passion—now that she requires me to do it, does she believe I'm going to do it?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, just a comment about the first question his leader asked. There are many boards that have signed agreements at more than six out of eight, so to somehow believe that this is simply a problem in

Durham—the information they are providing was not accurate in that regard.

Secondly, the reason teachers do those extra-special activities in a school, what we believe should be considered co-instructional, is that teachers told us, and we were all on the receiving end of that message—they said loudly and clearly that they do more than simply stand in front of a classroom. We agree. Of course they do. They do an incredible amount. Not only is there the coaching of the teams, but there are also the parent-teacher nights, the other special events: graduation ceremonies, Remembrance Day ceremonies, marking and lesson preparation. There's an incredible amount that those teachers do. This legislation recognizes that.

We do hear the concern about workloads; we do hear the concern about job loss. That's why we're proposing to bring down class size and put \$162 million more—

The Speaker: The member for St Paul's.

1540

GRANDVIEW TRAINING SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): Minister, I got off the phone with Patti Kelly, who is one of hundreds of Grandview survivors. She told me that she received notice in February that her counselling benefits were being cut off, effective March 31. She also told me, I'm sad to say, that when she learned of this news, she returned to a practice of slashing herself, self-mutilation, because she no longer has a counsellor. In April of this year, I'm sorry to report to this House, her daughter, who is also a victim of the Grandview survivor tragedy, committed suicide. Minister, in the name of Patti Kelly and in the name of Crystal Kelly, will you please rise and reverse your position and extend benefits to the Grandview survivors for counselling, and extend those benefits also to their family members who so desperately need this counselling?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for the question. As he may know, the Grandview agreement was negotiated by the previous government, by the NDP government, and negotiated to a conclusion in 1994. As part of that agreement, there was to be an apology in the House, which I made previously. Counselling was to be extended as part of the agreement. The member may not be aware but the administration of the Grandview agreement included the provision that therapists working with survivors would refer them to other support services within the community at the conclusion of the counselling program. If that is not happening or has not happened in a particular circumstance, I certainly would be concerned and I'd be prepared to follow up and make sure the terms of the agreement are being honoured.

Mr Bryant: Minister, what a member of your staff said yesterday was, "It's still our position that the province has fulfilled all commitments contained in the agreement." If you're saying that you're willing to look

beyond that and extend the benefits, then I applaud the minister for that.

But I have to tell you, these people are incredibly fragile. I didn't know this but I found out today, Minister, that in the same week you and I apologized to the Grandview survivors, three of those women committed suicide. They are at the edge of the abyss and their families are at the edge of the abyss. No position taken by any of your ministry officials that does not offer some compassion is going to assist them. I have to say that we'd better not head down the path whereby we have a sequel to the bullying of the Dionne sisters. I would urge the minister to not look into it but to stand up and commit to extending the benefits of the counselling to the Grandview survivors and to extend those benefits to their families. Will you do it or won't you?

Hon Mr Flaherty: This is not a partisan matter. The abuse at Grandview Training School should never have happened. There can be no excuse for it. On behalf of this Legislative Assembly I have expressed sincere regret for, and condemnation of, those events. There were discussions between the previous government and survivors of Grandview. So far, the survivors have received \$17.5 million in compensation, which includes financial awards, counselling, medical and dental treatments as well as educational and vocational training.

As I said in my response to the first question, the administration of the Grandview agreement included the provision that therapists working with survivors would refer them to other support services within the community at the conclusion of the counselling program. If that is not being done, then the agreement is not being complied with, and I will certainly follow up in that regard. We are all concerned with the survivors of Grandview, as the previous government was.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, the Honourable Helen Johns, who represents the great riding of Huron-Bruce. We've heard a great deal in this House about last week's budget, how our government is lowering taxes, balancing the budget and creating jobs in the process. What we haven't heard a lot about is how this is benefiting our arts and culture communities, including, for instance, the city of Stratford, where our government is committing \$2 million towards the refurbishing of the Avon Theatre for the Stratford Festival.

Minister, what else is our government doing to promote arts and culture across the province?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank the member for Perth-Middlesex for the question and I'd also like to thank him on behalf of the arts community in Stratford for his support of the Avon Theatre through this process. As people across the province may know, the Ontario

Science Centre and the Avon Theatre in Stratford were recognized within the budget. We talked about a commitment from SuperBuild to put a sports, culture and tourism partnership incentive into place. This incentive includes \$300 million invested over five years to ensure that we rebuild and enhance community structures all across this great province.

This not only includes cultural structures that the member was talking about; it also talks about recreational areas, arenas, sports complexes as well as tourism opportunities all across the province. It's wonderful that we were able to do this, and it couldn't happen, of course, without a strong commitment to tax reductions, deficit reduction—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

Mr Johnson: I can tell the minister that the news about the Avon Theatre has been well received in my riding. We're now looking to the federal government to commit its fair share to this excellent project.

On a related issue, we've all heard about how well Toronto is doing as our Hollywood North when it comes to filmmaking. What measures are taken in the budget to spread the benefits around the rest of the province and to smaller communities of this sort of venture?

Hon Mrs Johns: One of the initiatives in the budget was to ensure that we showcase the entire province when it comes to making films in this great land. Our hope is that we can take more and more films that are being produced in America and bring them to Ontario so we have a larger and larger film production area. This gives us jobs, it gives us spinoff industries and it helps all areas. Within the budget we have looked at different opportunities so that we can move films from middle America through to the Stratfords of the world and rural Ontario and northern Ontario and we continue to do that.

For all of the communities that are interested in having films in their area, I suggest they talk to the OFDC, as it is today, and make sure there's a film library there so that filmmakers all across America can look to your community to make films.

1550

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Mr Speaker, my question is for the Premier, so I'll defer to you as to how we solve that problem.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I believe the Premier was here. You can address it to someone else.

Interjections.

The Speaker: One of the problems we have is that the timelines are such that today we actually started question period—if we don't start very quickly, we won't even get to petitions. We can't do anything about that. I apologize for the delays. As you know, we started late, with the points of privilege and so on. So if you could address it to one of the ministers, that would be great.

Mr Levac: Thank you for your patience, Speaker. I appreciate that. My question will then be for the Chair of Management Board.

In a recent letter from the Ministry of Health addressing the concerns I presented to her on behalf of the constituents of Brant regarding the shortage of physicians that my riding has, she stated this: "As you know, Brantford is currently designated as underserved for 17 additional family practitioners, and Paris is designated for three more." This does not even include the shortages of specialists that Brant is now going through.

Minister, your own government is identifying the problem, the Minister of Health has identified the problem, a problem that has existed in Brant for many years. Why has your government failed to provide the citizens of Brant with access to a family doctor?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): As the member of the opposition points out, it is a serious problem. We have identified it. It's one we are taking steps to address.

It took us a long time to get into this mess and it's going to take us a while to work our way through it and get out of it. The agreement with the OMA takes another step toward solving this. The problem we inherited was that the medical schools had decreased enrolment by over 10% back in 1992 by the NDP government, and a number of other factors. The underserved area program was a step to try to address that. We need more physicians. That's why free tuition for people who want to go through medical school and then reside in an underserved area is a step forward—primary care, trying to encourage more doctors to go out and form a practice.

As you know, in the underserved areas it's not just about money, it's about quality of life. Sometimes one doctor alone is overworked and gets burned out. So we've taken steps to try to encourage the primary care model, where a group of doctors can work together and provide better access to the rural areas of this province. I encourage you to work with us on our initiatives to try to make it better for your area as well as all the other underserved areas in the province.

Mr Levac: By the way, Minister, it's not a rural area we're talking about. We're talking about the heart of a very large population of this entire province. I want to make sure you understand something: We're talking about today. The minimum amount of time you're talking about is seven years before we get those medical students out.

In the budget, the Minister of Finance stated that we are "announcing today that we will implement Dr Robert McKendry's recommendation to increase the number of spaces for medical students." We know that's not the case. The budget announcement was a reannouncement. You're playing with words with our people's health. What we don't want is the platitudes of saying, "Somewhere down the line we're going to find you some doctors." What we want now is action from the Premier, from the Minister of Health and now from you to simply say it's not a political question; this is a question of our

citizens' health. Will you instruct the Minister of Health to commit to increasing the number of medical school placements in order to assist the members of Brant? Would you also provide us with the tools we need to entice those doctors to come to Brant?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I pointed out before, we recognize that this is a very serious issue. It's an issue that affects my own riding, as well as many of my colleagues' ridings. Our government has taken unprecedented steps to address the issue of physician supply and distribution in this province. We're actively working on long-term solutions. Our budget commits \$100 million to expand primary care reform; \$75 million to transfer doctors in the academic health science centres to alternative payment plans; \$4 million for free tuition to medical students willing to practise in underserved areas; and \$11 million annually to address the McKendry report. This is on top of numerous other initiatives to try to improve the health care that we receive right across this whole province.

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have even more petitions to the Legislative Assembly with regard to the northern health travel grant.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

These petitions are signed by literally hundreds of my constituents from Hornepayne straight through to Killarney.

CAMPING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a petition signed by literally hundreds of people from the riding of Timmins-James Bay and other sister ridings with regard to the 21-day provision of the MNR, restricting camping for people within those particular areas. I've signed this petition and submit it on their behalf.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I do affix my signature along with a number of others from my constituency.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Certainly, the people who sent petitions in for the northern health travel grant may be responsible for the minister finally reviewing the program. I will read mine once again. We have hundreds more here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment

outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

Much like my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin, I have petitions from all across northwestern Ontario. Thank you very much for this support.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Pursuant to standing order 30(d), I am required to interrupt the proceedings and immediately call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

DIRECT DEMOCRACY THROUGH MUNICIPAL REFERENDUMS ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA DÉMOCRATIE DIRECTE PAR VOIE DE RÉFÉRENDUM MUNICIPAL

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 27, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 62, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in order to encourage direct democracy through municipal referendums, to provide additional tools to assist restructuring municipalities and to deal with other municipal matters / Projet de loi 62, Loi édictant, modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois en vue d'encourager la démocratie directe au moyen de référendums municipaux, de fournir des outils supplémentaires pour aider les municipalités restructurées et de traiter d'autres questions municipales.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 1, 2000, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Coburn has moved second reading of Bill 62. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1600 to 1605.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): All those in favour will please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Guzzo, Garry J.	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hardeman, Ernie	Palladini, Al
Chudleigh, Ted	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Clark, Brad	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Clement, Tony	Hudak, Tim	Snobelen, John
Coburn, Brian	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Churley, Marilyn	Levac, David
Bartolucci, Rick	Cleary, John C.	Marchese, Rosario
Bisson, Gilles	Di Cocco, Caroline	Martin, Tony
Bountrogianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	McGuinty, Dalton
Boyer, Claudette	Gravelle, Michael	McLeod, Lyn
Bradley, James J.	Hampton, Howard	Patten, Richard
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Christopherson, David		

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 45; the nays are 28.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 1, 2000, this bill will be ordered referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF FORMER PARLIAMENTARIANS ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR L'ASSOCIATION ONTARIENNE DES EX-PARLEMENTAIRES

Mr Gilchrist moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to establish the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians / Projet de loi 65, Loi constituant l'Association ontarienne des ex-parlementaires.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): We had a chance to make very brief comments when the bill was brought back to the House from committee, but this

really is a historic piece of legislation because it represents the first time that the new standing order 124 was used for the creation of a piece of legislation. As members of this House and many other people across this province know, traditionally there have been only two vehicles through which legislation could be brought forward and the laws of the province changed. Those were, of course, bills introduced by the sitting government and bills introduced by private members. The private members' bills are a fairly regulated process, and we each get one turn each session, but there's not a great opportunity for us to advance other initiatives in a timely fashion.

The Legislature changed the standing orders last session and now there is a third mechanism, and that mechanism is through committee. Every member of a committee has the opportunity to propose a piece of legislation once each session. They have a further guarantee that it will not only be debated in committee but they will have debating time here in the House if it passes committee. This bill represents the first such opportunity to move forward legislation and I really want to congratulate all members of the standing committee on general government. It really was a non-partisan initiative, and I want to thank my colleagues not just from the government side but from the Liberal and NDP parties as well. I think it was very much in the flavour that Ontarians would like to see us deal with legislation wherever possible. Suggestions are made, amendments are made, but at the end of the day we all make compromises and fashion a bill that meets the test of the best possible change to standing legislation.

This bill creates, in effect, an alumni association of former parliamentarians. We've all seen, sometimes with tragic consequences, what happens when members who are defeated or choose not to stand for re-election leave this place and have to reacclimatize themselves, have to get back into the workforce, back into the working society. We had one incident in Ottawa where the transition was far too dramatic for anyone's taste. I really think that having a resource, having a focal point that former members can turn to if they need advice, if they need a rallying point, if they need some counsel, is very much an initiative we should be pursuing.

It follows on the lead of many other provinces and of a similar organization at the federal level, the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians, which is currently chaired by Barry Turner, formerly a PC MP. In addition, the Americans have an association of former members of Congress for all the same reasons and with the same spirit. This is not a partisan group. It will not be there to promote any specific legislative agenda. It will have almost no cost, save and except that we will be asking the Speaker to allocate an office, and after that the cost would be borne by the association itself. But we think it's quite appropriate that that focal point be an office somewhere in the legislative precinct.

The other item I have to mention is the fact that even the inspiration for this bill was an all-party effort. The

idea first originated with Reverend Derwyn Shea, who was of course one of our colleagues in the last Parliament, and he was joined by two other members of the Conservative caucus, John Parker and Terence Young. But in addition, Mr Gilles Morin from the Liberal Party and Mr Tony Silipo from the New Democratic Party joined in the efforts, appeared before the committee and in every respect spoke equally eloquently of the need to bring forward this new association.

I'm not going to belabour the point. I think we have pretty unanimous agreement around both sides of the Legislature that this is an initiative which should move forward through second and third reading. I hope we get the agreement of all members today to give both second and third reading and allow this initiative to move forward. There is a steering committee, comprised of former members from all three parties, who will take it from there and bring it to fruition. I wish them Godspeed and the best of luck. I know I speak for all members in wishing them all the best in fulfilling the aims and objectives laid before us in committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I want to assure the member for Scarborough East, who is also the chair of our government committee, that he does have our support on this side, and that without doubt we will be proceeding as quickly as possible to pass this legislation.

I want to review a couple of items for the benefit of the people who do pay attention to these proceedings and for the record from the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in effect on Tuesday, November 2, 1999. We are making history today, and I concur with the comments that the member opposite said, so I want to review exactly why I think this is very instrumental and very important as a historic moment. This is one of those opportunities where we've been able to change the Legislature for the good of all members sitting. They don't have to be members of a ministry, they don't have to be members of any particular smaller group that gets brought down into the legislative possibilities, to bring legislation to the front of this House, and that's the committee.

"Report to the House: Report may contain the text of bill:

"124(d) Following its consideration of such a matter, the committee may present a substantive report to the House and may adopt the text of a draft bill on the subject matter. Where the text of a draft bill is adopted by the committee, it shall be an instruction to the Chair to introduce such bill in his or her name, as the primary sponsor. The other committee members who support the bill may have their names printed on the face of the bill as the secondary sponsors."

Not so much to get credit for passing a bill, but the fact that we now have the ability of a committee to introduce legislation to this House is historic, and I commend the Legislature, if passed, to put that into place.

There is still more to do. On a personal note, I do believe that private members' bills need to be tweaked a little bit more so that they can get to the legislative process quicker and better, but nonetheless, for this particular legislation we must compliment the committee members, and particularly the Chair for his leadership in drafting and getting this to the House.

Next, I want to say very clearly that it's—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. These were the two-minute comments and questions. You may have thought this was the full debate; I'm not sure.

Mr Levac: I'm done.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I wanted to take a very brief opportunity, which is all I have in two minutes, to express my gratitude to some people from our former caucus, the Reverend Derwyn Shea and Terence Young, who were very instrumental in bringing leadership to the bill before us today. I believe it is a credit to this Legislature that we're taking this important step to facilitate an opportunity for former members to continue to participate and have some activity in this place in which they have invested so much of their time and energy.

We know that, as a House, on a non-partisan basis, we will all benefit from them having a facility in this place, from our ability to continue dialogue with former members. No doubt many of them, having been here and now having perhaps a different perspective, will be able to give us some advice. That would be very helpful. Sometimes the farther the distance is that we get from this place, the better perspective we get on many of the issues. So I want to thank these two gentlemen, and I know there are others from other caucuses who will be giving credit to members on their side of the House for their initiative on this.

I want to thank the committee for the work they have done in bringing this forward. We look forward to giving unanimous consent, I trust, to third reading and passage of this bill this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

The member for Scarborough East has two minutes to respond.

Mr Gilchrist: I certainly won't take that. I simply thank the member for Brant, the member for Oak Ridges and my colleagues from all three parties for their involvement in the committee, and our colleagues who have formerly served in this House, who I'm sure will benefit immensely from the work of this association once it's formed.

1620

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Brant.

Mr Levac: I will complete the rest of my five-minute talk in less time, so I appreciate that very much. I also want to thank the member opposite for giving recognition to a couple of the key members who were very instrumental in putting this forward.

I want to continue by adding to the record the very purpose, the objectives of what this group is going to do. I think that might get lost if we don't put it on the record because there's more to it, as we discussed at committee level, than simply having a group of people who get together as alumni. There are some very key components to this that I think the public should be aware of.

The association is a non-partisan organization that is open to all persons who have been members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario but who at present are not serving. The objectives of the association are these: to put the knowledge and experience of its members at the service of the parliamentary democracy in Ontario and elsewhere; to serve the public interest by providing non-partisan support for the parliamentary system of the Ontario government; to foster a spirit of community among former parliamentarians; and the last two items, which the Chair knows I really spent a lot of time commenting and making recommendations on, which are to foster good relations between the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and former parliamentarians, and, finally, the one that I really did spend a lot of time on, and I know in discussions we have really important points to make with this one, to protect and promote the interests of former parliamentarians.

We did hear some tragic stories. We did hear some issues that unfortunately took place because of this transition. I for one believe the human being should be taken care of first and foremost. If we find that any former member of this place is in dire distress, we should be able to help that person, and in particular their family, make those adjustments.

I want to point to another item in the bill that took on a category of its own. It was called the non-partisan group; it is the non-partisan nature: "The association shall not pursue its objectives for any partisan political purposes whatsoever." That was wholly endorsed and supported by all members of all three parties.

As the member opposite did mention, I would like to say that the subcommittee that was formed to look into the drafting of this legislation did an absolutely stellar job, and I think they should be given most, if not all, of the credit. The transition team was comprised of the Reverend Derwyn Shea, Mr Tony Silipo, Mr Gilles Morin, Mr John Parker and Mr Terence Young. To those people I say thank you for having the fortitude to stick it out, because it did take some time. There were some revisions and there were some bumps and hills along the way. I know that through your good work, and credit to you, we're here today to talk about it. I can also tell the Chair without any reservation that the members on this side in the Liberal caucus will be looking forward to a very speedy passage of this bill.

On a personal note, I want to say this has probably been the most joyful operation that I've been part of in terms of what the public want the Legislature to do: to get along, to do the best possible legislation we can do. Unfortunately, these types of pieces of legislation just don't come along enough.

I want to thank the members of the committee and I want to thank the members of all three parties for being such good sports about this and making sure those people get taken care of, because some day we're all going to be there.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I'm honoured and I feel very privileged to be able to stand today and speak to a piece of legislation such as has been presented here this afternoon. I think it speaks to the best that's in all of us. It speaks to the best that is possible out of all of us. It speaks to the potential of this place to nurture the giftedness and the gifts that each of us brings to this place and to recognize after our day is done that what we have done is remembered, respected, supported and celebrated.

Of course the focus of the bill is to make sure we have in place an organization that will look after some of the needs of past members and make sure those needs are identified, worked with and encouraged, that will encourage the development of plans to make sure people are looked after and are well and continue to be productive and active members of the communities in which they live. My caucus supports that wholeheartedly. We have absolutely no difficulty with that.

As a matter of fact, my colleague Tony Silipo in the years I served with him was a person with a tremendously well-developed social conscience, a big heart and an understanding for the challenge it takes to do this job, a person who contributed above and beyond the call of duty, as all members of this place do.

It's not until you get here and you actually take part in the activities of this place, it's not until you begin to recognize the variety of subjects you have to understand and participate in, that you begin to fully understand the time, the commitment, the energy and the sacrifice that is made by members of Parliament.

On the outside it looks like a pretty snazzy job. There are a lot of perks and opportunities to strut your stuff and be out there in the public view and be important and be seen to be important. In fact, after you've been here for a while, you begin to realize that there are moments that, yes, are appreciated and enjoyed but that they're few and far between. Like anything else, this is, after all, a job that we all are privileged to get if we're elected by our constituents. But at the end of the day, if we're committed to it, and I don't know a member in this place over my ten years here who wasn't committed to doing the job they were elected to do, you work very hard. You put in long hours. You get into some debates that are quite gruelling at times. It takes an emotional toll of you from time to time as you win and lose in this arena. At the end of the day, you leave with a mark that in some ways, yes, is very positive and constructive, and in other ways can limit your potential and ability to actually re-enter the regular workaday world of the community from which you come.

This new parliamentary association will hopefully have the resources necessary to be helpful and supportive of each of us, because for each of us, in turn, our day will

come and we will face the challenge of re-entering and becoming not an MPP any more but serving in the ways we want to in the communities to which we will return.

The other thing I think it is important to highlight here is that we forget from time to time that we should celebrate the contribution MPPs make to the quality of life we all enjoy in the communities we live in. We sometimes take that for granted and we think it just happens, that somehow some of the good things we all enjoy as members of a community just fall out of the sky and into our laps and are there.

Well, they don't. They happen because leadership is given from varied and multiple sources in communities. It's given as well in a very clear, concrete and important way from those who serve at senior levels of government, and certainly this is one senior level here. To celebrate those contributions I think would be an important part and role and contribution this new parliamentary association could facilitate for all of us here and for the province.

It's in celebrating and recognizing the contribution that individual members make that we and the people we serve, and the generation behind us who are coming along who are looking at us and saying, "Who are they and what do they do?" will come to understand, realize and appreciate the importance of this place, the importance of government, the importance of politics.

Maybe just every so slightly, hopefully, it will diminish some of the negative connotation that has grown over the last five or ten years in this province, indeed in this country and around the world, when the issue of politics and politicians is talked of and looked at and reviewed in so many of the media outlets and other ways that politics is looked at in this day and age.

1630

This will present opportunity for the very positive and constructive and good things that politicians, for the most part—and again, I speak of my own experience—contribute to the good governance of this province and a building of the quality of life and opportunity and creating of space for people to participate in a province like Ontario. It's important that we do that, that we come to that time. I think this is the opportunity now. It's nice to be standing here today with all parties in agreement that we should in fact do that.

I remember for quite some time, because I'm a big Toronto Maple Leafs fan, watching as Harold Ballard refused to recognize, as other arenas used to around the NHL, the contribution that past stars and past players made. He wouldn't hang the banners and those kinds of things. I'm not suggesting for a second that we start hanging banners in here recognizing the contribution of some of the stars—and eccentrics sometimes—of this place, but just that we all remember and are reminded from time to time of that contribution and the benchmarks they set, that we need to sometimes rise to ourselves.

I think it's important that we put out there—not necessarily by hanging up banners, but in other ways—

things that we might come up with by way of recognition to add to the positive and constructive understanding of the role of politicians and members of Parliament, because sometimes it's that very negative picture that's painted, sometimes that very critical analysis and judgment that's made—

Interjection: The Fewer Politicians Act.

Mr Martin: Yes. I don't want to get partisan here this afternoon or else I would talk about that, and I could, in fact. But I want to be non-partisan and constructive in this.

If we did more in a positive and constructive nature, building up the role that we play in the evolution of civil society here in Ontario, politicians who find themselves moving on, for whatever reason, would have an easier time reintegrating into the communities in which they live. What they have done would be more likely to be seen in a light that would have people perhaps clamouring for their services, to serve on boards and commissions—even to offer them the opportunity of some gainful employment, because we know that the pension out of here now isn't so great any more. It used to be OK. You used to have a pretty decent pension if you served as a politician in Ontario. But since the last changes—and I think the members across the way are beginning to recognize this now—the pension isn't as rich as it used to be.

Interjection: It isn't. It's not even existing.

Mr Martin: Some might claim that it doesn't even exist any more in any real and significant sense. So the need becomes even more pertinent and obvious to have something in place to assist those people who come here, give of their time, serve, and end up having to go back with a five- or 10- or 15-year piece removed from their life where they haven't been building up pension credits someplace else, haven't been building up any relationship someplace else that might lend to taking care of themselves and their families in their retirement. I think that this organization, this new parliamentary association that we're talking about here today, could contribute in a very significant and important way to making sure that that happens.

I'm standing in partnership today with members of the Liberal and Conservative caucuses in saying this is a good move, in saying thanks to those who made the effort to make sure that what we have in front of us here today will do the trick, and we will be supporting whatever effort is put forward to make sure that this happens post-haste.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Just a quick question I have, and there may be room for another member, I hope. Is the member for Sault Ste Marie advocating a provincial senate? I just wanted to ask that question.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I just want to compliment the member for Sault Ste Marie. I'm glad he raised that point about the pensions, because there's a real misconception that those of us who have recently been elected have gold-plated pensions. I think it's important that the public hears that and that it's only

our distant relatives in Ottawa who have those great pension plans now.

I want to compliment, though, the members of all three parties and the legislative staff and former members who worked together to bring this initiative forward. I think it is very important that we recognize those contributions of past members of this Legislature.

I look back at some individuals who have served my own riding. Ron McNeil was a distinguished member of this Legislature for over 30 years. Ron is still active in his community. I think it's important to recognize the contributions of individuals like Ron. Other individuals who have also served part of my riding: Doug Reycraft, another long-time member of this Legislature; Peter North, a former member of the New Democratic Party, and then in 1995 Peter was elected as an independent member of the Legislature, for the first time in over 50 years; Marietta Roberts, another member of my riding, who gave distinguished service and actually sat in the Speaker's chair to serve the constituents of Ontario; and Bruce Smith, who recently was a member of this Legislature. Those are some individuals I think should be recognized for their past contributions and individuals too that we all understand have something that they can give back to the people of Ontario.

It's very fitting that this committee of former parliamentarians has been struck. It has been extremely successful in Ottawa in creating an alumni association and that bond, and continuing those bonds of friendship, because although we may be on opposite sides, at the end of the day we do need to walk out of this room and do what's best for our constituents. With that, I want to commend all three parties for their efforts.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I just would like in these two minutes to put a couple of words on the record with regard to this. Far too often we have engaged in this Legislature—not all members, but certainly from the predominant party, which I will not name at this point—in trying to demean politicians and the work they do. There has been legislation brought forward that in a lot of ways really tries to undermine the work that people actually do when they decide to put their name on the ballot and run for office,

Yes, these are good jobs. When you do get elected it's exciting. There are a lot of interesting things to do. You get to serve your community in a way that you probably can never do in any other job you may get. But we often forget that there's also a price you pay when you get elected. There's a price you pay with your family, and there's also a price you pay if you've been around this place long enough and you try to go back to what you were doing before. Often it's very difficult to go back.

Many people I know from this Legislature have come from various professions. When they've tried to go back into their former employment it has been pretty difficult to do. In some cases they don't want you back. You've been gone for 10 or 15 years. They don't feel you have any right to go back to your old employer. Many people put aside business interests. I was a small business person

myself. I know other people here who were in small business and ended up closing down successful businesses in order to run, get elected and serve the people of the province of Ontario.

Often when you leave there's not much left for you when you get out of this place, so I think it's only right that we try in this little way to give former parliamentarians a chance to make the transition a little bit easier, and hopefully some of the supports provided to some of the members when they leave this assembly will go a long way. This is a small step but an important step in trying to make that happen, and I want to thank the former members who worked on this committee for bringing this forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for Sault Ste Marie has two minutes to respond.
1640

Mr Martin: Just briefly, I want to thank the members from Brant, Timmins-James Bay and St Catharines for participating and responding to the comments I made.

I say to the member from St Catharines that I'm a great believer in public process, as you are. I'm a supporter of government and government processes. I'm a supporter of taking the time necessary to make sure that what we do here is the right thing on behalf of all of the people of Ontario. In fact, we should be doing more, in my view, of a non-partisan nature than we do here in this place so often. If a senate at the provincial level would contribute to that, I'd have no difficulty with that. I'm not one of the people out there condemning any level of government. Each level of government has its pluses and minuses and we should be doing everything in our power to make sure that they in fact work on behalf of people. I think that speaks to the contribution that so many people have made to this place over such a long time.

In my own instance, in Sault Ste Marie, there's a member who comes to mind that I think we should recognize and perhaps put on this committee, and that's Russ Ramsey, a Conservative member who used to be a cabinet minister in Bill Davis's government, who never fails to respond to any event that I lead in Sault Ste Marie. He comes, he participates. Even if it's a fundraiser, he puts his money on the table and he has supper and we celebrate the contribution that all of us make to the common life of the community that we all love and want to serve. I have lunch with him on a regular basis because I appreciate the advice that he gives me on things. I want to hear what he's thinking and what he's feeling about certain things.

I'm happy, as I said before, to support this and our caucus will be supporting it as well, of course.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gilchrist has moved second reading of Bill 65. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I seek unanimous consent to call third reading of Bill 65.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there consent? It is agreed.

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF FORMER PARLIAMENTARIANS ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR L'ASSOCIATION ONTARIENNE DES EX-PARLEMENTAIRES

Mr Gilchrist moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 65, An Act to establish the Ontario Association of
Former Parliamentarians / Projet de loi 65, Loi consti-
tuant l'Association ontarienne des ex-parlementaires.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I really don't think there's a need to belabour the point. All parties have put their comments on the record. I certainly appreciate the debate we've had and the input so far. I look forward to a successful vote for third reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions? Further debate?

Mr Gilchrist has moved third reading of Bill 65. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Be it resolved the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND SAFETY ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LES NORMES TECHNIQUES ET LA SÉCURITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 11, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 42, An Act to enhance public safety and to improve competitiveness by ensuring compliance with modernized technical standards in various industries / Projet de loi 42, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité publique et à améliorer la compétitivité en assurant l'observation de normes techniques modernisées dans plusieurs industries.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm very pleased to rise on behalf of the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the Honourable Bob Runciman, and speak to Bill 42 which is, I would say, in some ways an administrative bill, but in many ways it reflects the best thing this government does, which is to move towards streamlining and common sense.

It starts by looking from the perspective of An Act to enhance public safety and to improve competitiveness by ensuring compliance with modernized technical standards in various industries. You would know that in a lot of areas industry has changed and technology has changed to make industry adapt. I think this is really what this act is attempting to do.

There are seven existing acts—the Amusement Devices Act, the Boilers and Pressure Vessels Act, the Elevating Devices Act, the Energy Act, the Gasoline Handling Act, the Operating Engineers Act, the Upholsterers and Stuffed Articles Act—and those seven acts are regulated independently. What this does is bring the seven particular acts together, but the bill does retain the essential characteristics of licensing schemes.

Sections 4 and 5 deal with the appointment of directors and inspectors to supervise and inspect activities in

the technical standards industries. Section 6 provides for a system of authorizations for both persons and things in the areas governed by the act. Procedural safeguards with respect to revocations, suspensions and refusals to renew authorizations are set out in sections 7, 8 and 9. A director's decision with respect to an authorization may be appealed to the Divisional Court by the terms of subsection 11(1).

As you can see in what I've been saying here, it's somewhat technical in nature and, as such, the consultations with the external stakeholders have been very important in reaching some sort of consensus. As in all things, consensus isn't exactly what you get every day of the week.

Staff have prepared some notes for me on Bill 42 and, for the record, I will try to stick to the script. I see some of them sitting there rather nervously that I might say something that isn't exactly scripted. I can assure them that I've listened—in fact I've read the legislation—but I know certain things have to go on the record. It's now 10 to 5, and if you really want to watch *The Young and the Restless* or something, it's probably OK. I'm talking to viewers at home. But I will try to be entertaining on the way through.

I'm pleased to speak in support of the Technical Standards and Safety Act and the potential benefits the bill contains for Ontario consumers.

Bill 42 will provide better protection for Ontario's consumers. Think of it when riding the ski lift, for instance, in my riding of Durham. At the Oshawa Ski Club it's Mount Kirby. So when I'm riding the ski lift, I should be assured that there is safety, as in elevating devices, elevators and escalators, and whenever they fill up a snowmobile. Again, snowmobiling is very popular in my riding of Durham. I think of the Port Perry Snowmobile Club, which is well known, as is the Ganaraska group as well. Procedures for filling up gas tanks are covered by this, as are propane tanks.

This bill unites the province's seven technical safety laws, as I said, into a consolidated piece of legislation. Included in the regulations would be the details and technical standards affecting the operation of the boilers and pressure vessels that heat and cool Ontario's office buildings, schools, hospitals and factories. Safety amusement devices: As we approach the good season in the year 2000, there will be a lot of amusement devices around. In fact, today in the House there were a few amusement devices around.

The legislation would pave the way for businesses in technical industries in this province to continue with the very high standards they have achieved to date. Ontario is seen as the leader in technical safety across North America. This government is committed to building on that reputation to ensure that Ontario can meet the technical and safety challenges into the new century.

To develop this bill, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the Honourable Bob Runciman, has worked together with the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, or TSSA, the province's technical

safety watchdog and the not-for-profit organization responsible for the administration of the statutes.

The TSSA was started up under the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act in 1996. The corporation received authority to deliver technical safety programs and services in the organization's areas of expertise on May 5, 1997. The TSSA performs many valuable tasks for the ministry. TSSA staff review and register engineering designs before equipment is manufactured or installed. They approve, license and inspect facilities and equipment both at the time they are installed and periodically during operation. More than 20 kinds of tradespeople are certified and licensed by TSSA, including operating engineers, gas fitters and pressure welders. I can tell you these are very important trade areas that need to have standards of safety that apply across the province.

1650

TSSA is a testament to the success of the government's strategy of placing responsibility for the day-to-day operation of specialized business sectors with the professionals who know them best.

TSSA has strengthened partnerships with associations and government organizations across Canada and the United States to promote greater understanding of Ontario's stringent public safety requirements. This is helping to achieve a greater degree of compliance among companies from other jurisdictions to allow them to operate safely while operating in Ontario.

In 1998-99 alone, TSSA's record of achievements in improving technical safety for Ontarians was impressive. TSSA delivered the first Safe-T-Rider program designed to reduce accidents on elevators and escalators to more than 8,200 schoolchildren in the province, and launched a similar program called A Safe Ride in five seniors' centres across Ontario.

On the professional side, the authority worked in partnership with industry to design and manufacture a universal elevator rope gauge, a device to automatically measure the diameter of elevator wire to determine when it needs replacement. As you can see, there are many technical aspects to this legislation that have been worked on by the professions themselves.

TSSA also worked on strategies for the enhancement of public safety on the ski slopes through improved risk evaluation for aging ski lifts. We've seen this across other jurisdictions where this can constitute a problem, and I'm pleased to have an action plan here that's working.

By operating on a cost-recovery basis fair to both industry and the taxpaying public, TSSA has been able to increase the number of inspectors and the number of investigations it conducts. As a result, Ontario communities are safer.

Since June 1997, just a month after receiving authority to deliver technical safety programs, TSSA has been working with the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations to review safety legislation. The legislation was thoroughly reviewed and we found that a new con-

solidated legislative framework was necessary to keep Ontario at the forefront of technical safety. We planned to develop a new legislative framework that would cut red tape for the industries by modernizing and improving the efficiency, responsiveness and flexibility of the existing legislation.

At the same time, the new legislation was intended to enhance the level of public safety. Obviously the issue of safety transcends all aspects of this legislation. Amalgamating the seven provincial technical standards acts into one uniform piece of legislation and transferring technical provisions to the regulations would allow technical industries to make improvements in safety equipment quickly as new technology becomes available. In that respect, we've outlined in this forum to allow the updates to be handled through regulation, as opposed to having to amend the bill: a far more efficient and flexible way of dealing with the changes in a technically changing society.

Streamlining is key throughout the new legislation. For example, the new legislation provides for uniform decision-making and appeals processes for all of the technical industries administered by TSSA. The new system would be simpler and more cost-efficient for both TSSA and all of its stakeholders. The benefits for affected businesses are in keeping with the government's promise to reduce red tape and provide more effective, less costly services through improved efficiency in the administration of public safety.

In developing the legislation, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations and TSSA conducted extensive consultations with industry specialists and groups, and with consumers. More than 200 stakeholders were consulted in drafting the proposed new legislation, and TSSA will consult further as new proposals for regulatory change develop.

Thank you for bearing with me while I had that sip there, Mr Speaker.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Are you feeling better now?

Mr O'Toole: Yes, I'm feeling much better now.

In the areas of fuels safety, elevators, pressure vessels and amusement devices, technological advances that could improve safety are being made every single day. It is our goal to ensure that these new advancements are available to help the people of Ontario.

In the interest of full debate in the House today, I'm asking for everyone's unanimous support for this important piece of legislation. I'm interested in listening today. I believe Mr Caplan or Mr Bradley is about ready to speak, so with that, I think the points have been made. I'm very confident that public input will make for better legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I guess there is general support for the bill, but I want to raise with the parliamentary assistant a difficulty that has

arisen out of this bill having to do with people who require testing in languages other than English. For example, in the past, if you were not from Canada and you spoke Italian and were a tradesperson coming in, let's say as a pressure welder, you were able to walk into the Ministry of Skills Development, ask for an interpreter and they would interpret the exam for you and you'd be able to do the exam in your own language.

Si tu étais francophone, il n'y avait aucune difficulté. Tu es rentré au ministère provincial, le ministère te donnait l'examen en français, et c'était comme tous les autres services offerts par la province. Il n'y avait aucun problème. Le ministère donnait le test en français, l'individu écrivait le test, et si l'individu passait, il avait fini avec son certificat.

But with this new private association, we're finding that you cannot get service in languages other than English. I have had this argument with the TSSA since about last winter. They are basically refusing to give any kind of testing to anybody other than in the English language. If the parliamentary assistant really thinks this is a good thing, I would argue it is only good for those people who speak English. If you are French-speaking or speak any other language and you go in there to write an exam, you're unable to do so in any language other than English. I see that as a diminution of services compared to what it used to be before.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Durham has two minutes to respond.

Mr O'Toole: The member for Timmins-James Bay certainly makes a point. That's what this public discussion is about: listening to concerns. The ultimate goal here is to make this work for the people of Ontario. Certainly there would be provisions in today's seven different acts that we mentioned. We're dealing with the issues that have been raised. When we're consolidating these into a new legislative framework, I'm confident that the issues that are brought forward both here in the House and in the public process will be dealt with. As I said, some 200 stakeholders and individuals have been consulted to date. There is a list of concerns and considerations. I have reviewed some of them. I'm certain the minister's staff and the ministry people who have actually drafted this in consultation are interested in hearing input as well.

I'm confident that as we discuss this very technical piece of legislation we will end up with a better legislative framework, a consolidated framework, that works for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to contribute to this debate perhaps in a more philosophical way than the previous, government member, who got trapped in the intricacies and details of the bill, as opposed to the philosophy which surrounds this piece of legislation. I should mention that I'm going to be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, if he is able to be with us and is out of the committee he's involved in at the present time.

The first thing I want to say is that this deals with important devices, such as amusement devices. They might be such things as you find in an amusement park: Ferris wheels, merry-go-rounds and those kinds of things. I know they're not going to have that kind of activity at the Grantham High School reunion, which is scheduled for the long weekend in May; that is, Friday, May 19 and Saturday, May 20. On Friday night people will be going to Governor Simcoe Secondary School, because the old Grantham High School will not be available, and will be partaking of the activities on that evening, including nostalgia rooms, which remind me of this Legislature from time to time. They will be there. On Saturday afternoon there will be a barbecue, and on Saturday night there will be a major get-together at the Garden City Arena, which is now called the Jack Gatecliff Arena, and the Rex Stimers Arena, which adjoin.

1700

So all who are watching the Legislature this afternoon should know that Grantham High School will be having that reunion on that occasion and that people can still sign up. It isn't too late to register, and for only \$30 you can do so. There are actually people who work on staff in this building and in other buildings who attended Grantham High School at one time and would want to make sure that they are going to take part in this particular reunion.

I know there was a Web site for it, because I was looking at the Web site a while ago, where people could contact those who would have further information on this event which is of such great importance. We have already over 1,000 people who have signed up for this event and they will be looking forward to it. I know all members of the Legislature will be telling people in their own ridings about the fact that this special event is taking place at the Grantham High School reunion.

Friday night, from 6 o'clock to midnight, there are nostalgia rooms. You can watch early videos of Grantham in the Grantham theatre. There's live entertainment, bands from the past. Complimentary food platters will be available. The next item I can't say; I think it would violate the Liquor Licence Act, because you can't advertise those things. Saturday the gym will be open at Governor Simcoe Secondary School for, it says, "fun and games." I don't know if that involves amusement devices. Saturday there will be a family barbecue from 12 noon to 2 pm, and Saturday at 2 pm a group photo. Saturday night will be the major dance and get-together. Your favourite beverages are available. I can't say what they are, but they will be available. I'm thinking, of course, of orange juice and various soft drinks. And a free shuttle from the lower-level parking lot.

So you can see this is a major event. This is how you can find out information. As you know, I'm very much into computers so I will tell you how you can get access. Here's what it says on the sheet: http://www.grantham-2000.com/ghs_cost.html. It's all in lower-case letters.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Was that a forward slash or a backward slash?

The Deputy Speaker: It's definitely forward.

Mr Bradley: It was a slash that went like this, for those who are watching, a diagonal dash. Anyway, I think it's going to be a great event and I hope nothing happens as a result of this bill, because there may be something happening there that should be under the auspices of this bill.

My concern about my philosophy on this—I know there's a fair difference between some of us on this side and some on the government side, but I happen to believe that you shouldn't put the fox in charge of the hen house. I prefer a government agency supervising that is detached from it, at some distance from these various groups and organizations that are carrying on activities. For instance, we used to have serious accidents once in a while at a midway, whether it was the CNE or somewhere else. I always thought the government should supervise that—or elevators that can have accidents as well. A government agency completely detached from the organization should be supervising.

This bill changes that and in essence puts Colonel Sanders in charge of the health and safety of the chickens, if you want to use that, so I find myself with some difficulty with the piece of legislation.

But it does mention amusement devices and that reminds me that some amusement devices are now found in racetracks. In fact, the government of Ontario was rushing headlong into 44 new charity casinos. I used to call them Mike Harris gambling halls but others, on the government side particularly, referred to them as charity casinos. There was a lot of opposition to them because people recognized that the people you were going to get at these charity casinos were not flying in from Vegas and they weren't flying in from New York City or London, England; they were going to be local folks who could be spending their money more productively to help the local economy, instead of spending the money on these slot machines.

The government, and perhaps there was some opposition even from government backbenchers, backed off the 44 new Mike Harris gambling halls, operating seven days a week, 24 hours a day, almost 365 days a year. We knew as well that ultimately this would lead to video lottery terminals, the crack-cocaine of gambling, in every bar and every restaurant on every street corner of every village, town and city in the province of Ontario. That was the ultimate goal when the government wanted to get its gambling funds. I well remember.

I want to tell you there are times when I've agreed with Premier Mike Harris and Treasurer Ernie Eves: during 1994 when they were talking about gambling. Our Premier—now the Premier, then the leader of the Conservative Party—said he didn't want to have anything to do with these gambling revenues. Mr Eves was very critical. I used to have the quotations so I could read word for word; I won't read them today.

They talked about the dangers of the expansion of gambling and yet we have seen, with this government in power, a Conservative government which is supposed to

be pro law and order and care about the family expanding gambling opportunities drastically in this province, wanting now to bring in the slot machines through the back door. They slammed the front door shut and said: "We're only going to have four of these new Mike Harris gambling halls, the charity casinos. There will have to be votes and a lot of rigamarole before you could possibly have one set up." So there was kind of a moratorium. But then the back door was pried open and now in so many of the racetracks you have these slot machines. The emphasis is no longer on the racing of horses and the kind of activities related to that, but rather people are sitting at slot machines just feeding the slot machines hours on end.

I notice in Fort Erie they don't call it the Fort Erie Race Track any more, they call it the Fort Erie Race Track/Slots. The real attraction is trying to get some local money in for that.

I happen to feel that's too easy money for government. If governments feel they can justify programs and projects, they should use the traditional methods of taxation to derive the funds, and if they can't be justified, they should not be expending those funds.

The government will say that we spend all kinds of money now on remedial programs, on treatment programs for addicts. We know that the people who often frequent these establishments are the most vulnerable and desperate people in our society, often addicted to gambling. We keep expanding those opportunities. That's what I worry about when I talk about the amusement devices, those video lottery terminals and the slot machines people may spend endless hours at.

I know as well that they have the machines you get money out of. What do you call those? ATMs. You can see that I am technologically advanced. You put a card in and out comes money. People are maxing these out, getting all the money they have, their maximum amount of money out and then blowing the money in the casino or in the slot machines they can find somewhere.

I really wonder how the family values crowd, those who claim to be a family values crowd in this House, can justify this happening and are not demanding of the Premier that he revert to his original opinion of principle in 1994 when he said he wanted nothing to do with funds that were derived from gambling.

I also see this bill deals with the Gasoline Handling Act, which is very convenient.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Gas prices going through the roof.

1710

Mr Bradley: As the member for Eglinton-Lawrence says, the gasoline prices just shot up to over 70 cents a litre today. He was under the opinion that the world oil price had come down and that somehow the prices of gasoline would come down, but they were over 70 cents. No doubt he, when he shares my time as well, will have something to say about that because he is the critic in this field.

I want to say to you as well that this government, speaking of gasoline handling, has a chance within its own jurisdiction to regulate the amount of sulphur in gas. The poor Minister of the Environment—and I'm sympathetic to him. The Former Minister of the Environment Club tends to be sympathetic to a minister. They dealt him the wrong cards. They dealt him all deuces this time, or jokers, because he got a significant cut in his budget once again. The Ministry of the Environment has had one third of its staff turfed out the door, no longer there to do the job. About 40% of the budget's been slashed, and he got another cut this time.

He had a strategy. The whiz kids either in his office or in the Premier's Office said: "You know what you should do? When in trouble, attack the feds." So he called a press conference way out in Etobicoke. I don't think he thought I would go out there—it's so far to go and we all know how bad the traffic is getting there. But I did anyway. I struggled out to Etobicoke to the Ministry of the Environment area, and I wouldn't say I crashed the press conference, but I was there available for comment just in case the media was interested in the other point of view.

The purpose of the press conference, I can tell you, was quite simple. It was to divert attention from the fact that he had just been kneecapped by the Treasurer. He'd just had his budget slashed once again. I would have gotten up in the House and commiserated with him for that, and I would have suggested to the Minister of the Environment that he submit his resignation, not based on incompetence or something like that but based on the fact he's insulted by the fact he had been cut. But let's get back to what it was about.

He said, "The federal government should get the sulphur in gas down to a much lower level sooner." Well, those of us who recall history, and very recent history, remember that a previous Minister of the Environment—not the member for Guelph—got into a discussion about sulphur in gasoline and was taking the side of the oil companies, the captains of the oil industry, side by side, shoulder by shoulder. Then at the very last minute, when he saw he lost the argument, he got out in front of the parade and demanded that it be reduced to 30 parts per million. You can have an average, and you cannot exceed 80 parts per million sulphur in gas. I pointed out to the people who were there, "You know, if he really feels strongly about this, the provincial government in fact has the power to regulate sulphur in gas." In British Columbia they do it. They regulate sulphur in gas in British Columbia. It's a provincial power if you want it, because where you regulate is at the pump.

As you would know, Mr Speaker, as a person who's knowledgeable in many areas, the volatile organic compounds, known as VOCs, are in fact regulated by the provincial government. That's the stuff that evaporates in the summer. If you have your car in a hard parking lot, you'll find that the gas will vaporize easily. You need catchment systems and you need a certain kind of gas so it won't vaporize as much. It's called the Reid vapour

pressure level that you're dealing with. I remember when I was the minister, we regulated that downward. The present government renewed that particular regulation, so again they have the power to do it.

So I say to the Minister of the Environment that it's no good simply to bark in the background; you have to actually bite. In other words, the dog can't just do a lot of barking and pretend he's interested in doing something. He's got to actually attack in this case. I think you would agree with me, being the fair-minded person that you are, that the Minister of the Environment of Ontario should simply announce that in the year 2002, no gasoline will be sold in this province that has over 30 parts per million sulphur on average, and it cannot exceed 80 parts per million at any time. That's what I see with this Gasoline Handling Act, what can be done there.

Irving Oil is moving quickly to this. I'll share with members of the House a little side story. I remember when the New England states said, "We want clean gas in the New England states because we have a problem with smog." They said to Irving Oil in New Brunswick, "You can't sell any gas to us unless it meets this qualification." So we had gas companies that were supplying the US market with clean gas and the Canadian market with dirtier gas because they bluffed certain governments on the Canadian side of the border into believing that the industry would collapse if they had to produce cleaner gasoline.

It's simply a matter of regulating it and being tough with the regulation and penalties, and I urge the minister to do that—in addition, of course, as you would agree, to requiring that if the Lakeview coal-fired generating plant is sold, one condition must be, and the member for Mississauga South would be in full agreement with me on this—

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I've asked for it.

Mr Bradley: She has asked for it, as well as our good mutual friend Hazel McCallion, the mayor of Mississauga. She was out in the field. I saw her picture out there. She was demanding as well that it be converted to natural gas before it would be sold.

In addition to that, of course, we should have a massive investment in public transit so we can alleviate some of the pollution that's caused by all the vehicles that keep coming into the Metropolitan Toronto area day after day. It was a three-hour trip, I must say, from St Catharines today to Toronto, and one of the people appearing before our committee took a long time to come as well, two and a quarter hours from Burlington today.

The minister also has another response. He says, "I'm going to tell you when the smog is coming," and some of the newspapers actually printed that as though it was something great that you're going to know when the pollution is coming. Most people in Ontario said, "Would you do what we can in Ontario to get rid of the pollution?" and not engage in pollution credit trading, where you simply allow one set of polluters to pollute a lot and another set of polluters not to.

Hon Mrs Marland: Jim, you talked about trading emissions.

Mr Bradley: No, that wasn't trading emission at all.

Hon Mrs Marland: You did, though.

Mr Bradley: No. I tell you, they wanted that. You will recall that, with your help, ultimately they didn't have it. The member for Mississauga South, as critic for the Conservatives, was very helpful in committee, along with the Liberal and NDP members of the committee, in ensuring that the recommendation of the committee was that we not allow Ontario Hydro to get involved with what was called "banking." I've always thought very highly of the member for Mississauga South, not only for that reason, but that is one of the reasons. She was very much onside with that issue, I must say.

As I look at this bill, I am concerned, as I think many on this side are, that in fact we should not be turning responsibility for the regulation of certain industries over to those industries themselves. I think it's unfair to them. I think there's potentially a conflict of interest. I think that's a role government should play.

If there is funding required for it, and you people believe in user fees, then you might want to apply user fees to those who are benefiting from the government regulation in that particular case. We all know that user fees are taxes. The member for Eglinton-Lawrence and I have now counted 892 new or raised user fees since this government got into power. The Premier always said, and I agreed with him then, that a user fee is a tax. When I see 892—and perhaps I have missed some of them—that have been raised, we all know that is detrimental to people in this province, particularly at the lower end of the echelon, in terms of the amount of money they have.

I am pleased to have entered into the debate on this. I am sharing time with the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, the critic in this area, and I'm going to now turn the floor over to the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, who will deal in some detail with this particular piece of legislation.

Mr Colle: It's always a pleasure to follow my esteemed colleague, the voice of the Garden City. He certainly is at his flowery best today, considering I hear the tulips are in full bloom all along the Niagara Escarpment and the Niagara Parkway. It's a wonderful place in this province to visit and it's not far from any major place. My favourite part of that area of the province is probably Port Dalhousie. It's a beautiful old port city to walk around, with beautiful old homes. We who live in Ontario should be mindful of the beautiful places we have very close to us here. We don't have to go to wherever they go, Aruba and those places. I think they should stay and visit Listowel and Stratford and St Thomas and those places. Anyway, it's a pleasure to follow my esteemed colleague from the Garden City.

1720

Bill 42 has been before this Legislature or in committee for over two years now. There has been a lot of work done on this bill and I think this is the second minister with whom I've worked on this bill. I note that at first blush people think this is nothing but technical

complexity that doesn't affect people. But I can assure you that bills like this do a lot of work behind the scenes to ensure there is enhanced safety in the province. Certainly in opposition we sometimes are very critical, and it's our job to be critical, about initiatives the government takes that we disagree with. We certainly point out the flaws and the faults.

In this bill we've gone through a process of trying to update rules and regulations that sometimes date back 30 or 40 years. So I certainly applaud the ministry and the two ministers. I dealt with Minister Tsubouchi and now Minister Runciman on this bill. I really commend all the work that's been done behind the scenes in putting this piece of legislation together. It is a process where all the stakeholders have been consulted thoroughly. The stakeholders are from a wide range of occupations and industries that affect Ontarians and their safety. That's what this bill is about, enhancing public safety by processes where participants in these industries can set up their own regulations, monitor themselves and improve and also license providers of these services.

I think it is a very positive partnership approach that the government has taken in enhancing safety in these areas. One of the areas that it deals with is amusement devices. As you know, cities and towns all across Ontario have fairs. We have the Central Canada Exhibition in Ottawa. We have the CNE down here in Toronto. That's typical of where there are amusement devices, roller coaster rides etc that require safety standards be met very stringently. This bill would help in establishing those benchmarks for that industry which could impact on the safety of a lot of children especially and people who ride amusement rides all across the province. It's much needed and it's something that is in place, and I think it is a very positive step.

Also, elevating devices are affected by this legislation. The organization that basically has the umbrella power to regulate and create these partnerships with government is the Technical Standards and Safety Authority. It's an innovative way of dealing with the complexity of very minute issues which don't seem to be important at first glance but are critical to handling very life-dependent devices. We're talking essentially about elevators. You can imagine how many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people in this province take rides on elevators. This bill deals with standards in how to enhance and maintain safety in elevators in private apartment buildings, in commercial buildings and in public buildings.

We rely on and we almost think it's automatic to have safe elevators. You don't have safe elevators unless you have qualified, trained and licensed people to build the elevators and maintain them and keep them up to standard. This bill deals with a protocol to keep our elevators safe. You can't tell me that isn't important to a lot of Ontarians. That is why this bill is positive. It deals with this very important connection to people's safety.

There's also an area of this bill that deals with upholstered and stuffed articles. Some people say: "What does that mean? That's not important to me or my

family." We have to realize how allergic people sometimes are to certain by-products that are in our furniture, in our sofas and couches etc. The one you're sitting on, Mr Speaker, do you know what's behind the leather you're sitting on? You don't. It sounds a bit humorous, but it ensures that the product that's inside is not going to be hazardous to your health.

In the past they used to stuff some of the furniture, bed mattresses etc with some imported products that were hazardous to people's health. It's just an example of how it may be very minute in nature or very insignificant, something we as Ontarians take for granted, but there are people ensuring that this is up to safety standards that don't endanger the health of Ontarians who sleep on mattresses or sit on couches. It sounds very mundane, but it is a safety issue. This bill deals with that also.

Another area is boilers and pressure vessels. Here we're talking about heating plants for huge buildings: schools, churches, synagogues. They have to have certain codes of operation, inspection, licensing. This bill sets up a protocol which is very necessary to ensure that the highest standards are met for these devices we all rely on, for heating for instance, and on boats and vessels.

Operating engineers are people who run our heating plants and take care of the mechanical parts of buildings. They have to meet certain standards, according to this bill.

The handling of fuels: As you know, very serious accidents can occur. I can remember that in the city of York at one time we had a very serious explosion up on Weston Road because standards were not high enough at a propane gas station. This bill sets out rules and regulations, protocols for the handling of everything from natural gas to petroleum to propane.

These are some examples of why this bill has been over two years in the making. Some people will tell you that for over 10 years they've been trying to get this bill forward and updated. It is very technical, very complex, very mechanical in nature, deals with a lot of engineering aspects that the average member of the public doesn't deal with.

Being a proponent of this bill, I am very much in support of the approach this bill takes. Our caucus is appreciative of the work done by all the stakeholders. We support this bill because we think it serves a public that requires the highest of safety standards. These are items that may not be in the front row as far as the public is concerned. They're events and protocols that take place behind the scenes. We need this type of legislation. I think it deserves passage. It is a very positive bill with a lot of good partnerships being established and an innovative way of dealing with the stakeholders, the entrepreneurs and also the experts in these fields, who have put together a whole new series of standards that I think are very positive for Ontarians, who expect and demand safety and sometimes take it for granted. This bill does a lot of work that will ensure many lives are saved and a lot of injuries prevented.

This is preventive medicine. It's a good investment in the time of the Legislature and a good investment for all of those who have put in the last two years of work on this bill, whether it be ministry staff or whether it be the stakeholders. I think it's something very worthwhile and I encourage passage of this piece of legislation. It is a good bill that I hope will become law in the very near future.

Thank you very much for your patience, Mr Speaker.
1730

Hon Mrs Marland: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I think it's very important for the House to recognize that the Attorney General's family—his wife Christine and their three young boys, three young brothers who are in fact triplets—is visiting in the members' gallery at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I won't be long here this afternoon. I'll be sharing my time with the member from Timmins-James Bay if he makes it back before I finish. He's probably watching out there somewhere, keeping track of everything that's going on in here, because that's his style. He's a guy who is always engaged. He may not be here but he's engaged. He's watching and participating.

Interjection: He'll be here.

Mr Martin: And he'll be here; any opportunity to get up and present his point of view, challenge the government in his own inimitable way on the things he feels very strongly and powerfully about.

Interjection: He's always fair.

Mr Martin: He's always fair, yes. He's a fair-minded individual, and I will be sharing my time with him.

I just wanted to say right off the bat that our caucus and I will be supporting this bill, but in saying that I also want to share with the House that we still have some concerns, not necessarily about this bill but about the context within which this bill is happening. Also, I want to raise some things that were actually previously raised in 1996 when we in this House, on the recommendation of the standing committee on administration of justice, passed the original bill, the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act. It set up the Technical Standards and Safety Authority for the province, which hived off a piece of work that used to be done directly by the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations in the interests of safety for the people of this province.

First of all, given where we are now with the establishment of the Technical Standards and Safety Authority and echoing the sentiment of the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, the critic for the Liberal Party on consumer and commercial relations, who spoke previous to me, the very good work and the amount of work that has been done since 1996 by the Technical Standards and Safety Authority—Mr Walter met with me on a couple of occasions to provide me with information and offered to set up meetings for me with people who might have some concern about the act we're dealing with here today and

to be helpful in a myriad of different ways. I want him and the authority to know that I appreciate that. I always appreciate people helping me do my job effectively and helping me understand some of the challenges, the pros and cons of these very important pieces of legislation as they work their way through the system so that I can participate on behalf of the people of Ontario and on behalf of my own constituents, who certainly have a stake in this and need to know and be confident that whatever authority we set up, whatever legislation we put in place, that authority will then oversee and is in fact going to do the job.

It's with that in mind, however, that I raise again an issue that was raised during the discussions on the original bill that set up the authority. That was a concern that, given that this is now going to be at arm's length from government, the overseeing body, the board of directors, so to speak, of the authority is inclusive of all of the stakeholders who are to be affected by this, not just those who have a vested interest because they do the work or the work is being done on their behalf or they stand to benefit because a "thing," as they say in some of this legislation, provides some service for them in delivering the business that they are involved in, but also consumers and those who work in the industry are involved in overseeing and challenging and making decisions and improving and helping to evolve the management of this very important piece of work that the province ultimately, I feel, continues to hold responsibility for and should be held accountable for.

I reference some presentations that were made to the committee at that time by the Consumers' Association of Canada and the Consumers Council of Canada. They were supportive of movement of this sort, anything that would enhance safety where consumers are concerned. But they did raise a very serious concern, and I raise it again. I know that Mr Walter will understand when I say that in passing this legislation, which will consolidate a whole number of different statutes that are on the books now in the province of Ontario in the effort to make them more streamlined, make them more effective, make them such that they are more understandable and ultimately implementable, he continue to include, continue to discuss with, continue to involve, all of the stakeholders involved in this as time evolves. I am standing here today saying that our caucus will support this legislation with the sincere understanding that he will in fact do that. I believe that he was very sincere when he came to visit me in my office and shared with me some of the conversations and discussions that he'd already had and his commitment to doing that.

The other thing that concerns me that I think needs to be put on the record here today is the offhand way that this government continues to hive off that which it has responsibility for delivering. It takes in money from the people of Ontario in order to deliver certain programs and services to the people of Ontario, none of them any more important than protecting the safety of those who call Ontario home. For them to be continually, week after

week in this place, coming up with more and more ways of having less responsibility, of creating arm's-length organizations—I bring to your attention one by way of example: the Ontario Realty Corp, which has found itself in some degree of difficulty. I would hope that Mr Walter and those who are responsible at the Technical Standards and Safety Authority will take a lesson from what's going on there and do everything in their power to continue, as I know they are now, to make sure that everything they do is above-board.

We were convinced that while the overseeing of some of these statutes we're combining here today in this new bill was being done by the very professional, committed staff of the public service in Ontario, represented by OPSEU, we were fairly comfortable that in fact things were being looked after and that when we took an elevator we knew it was going to get us to where we were going, that the incidents of accidents and mishaps were minimal, and that our needs were being overseen in all of that.

I just put that out by way of caution and concern. We continue to be concerned about that, because this government continues down that road and we have here an authority of that nature that has been hived off and put out there to act at arm's length from government to deliver a service that is of utmost importance to all of us who use some of the devices referred to here that the member from Eglinton-Lawrence spoke about just a few minutes ago and that we need to continue to pay attention to.

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The other piece of this that concerns me: It's the last piece and then I'll turn it over to my colleague from Timmins-James Bay because he has a concern as well, and it's a very legitimate concern, one the authority needs to take a serious look at. Having heard from the member very clearly, and having had the privilege of having a look at some of the communication that went back and forth, and we'll hear again today as he puts it on the table in this place, I'm confident that they will act in a positive way, respond and make sure it is dealt with. I don't think it's something that will get in the way of us here this afternoon, though, supporting and voting for this piece of legislation as it moves forward, because it's very important, given where we are, that we now give the authority the tools they need to actually get out there and do the job in a professional, effective and safe way.

The other thing that concerns me is the funding—always the funding. This government is very good at giving tax breaks that accrue mostly to those who are most well off. I don't say that in any really critical way. I just say it because it's the way it is; it's the truth. We have in this province what we refer to as a progressive taxation system, which means the more you make, the more taxes you pay. When you hear about tax breaks, it concurrently means the more you make, the more tax break you get, particularly if you speak of that tax break by way of percentages, because as you know, 10% of \$20,000 is a lot less than 10% of \$100,000.

This government continues to give the money we all contribute by way of tax into the centre to pay for such things as the oversight of some of the technical devices we use in our day-to-day lives in this province. There's less and less of that money available now because the government keeps giving it away, keeps giving it back by way of tax breaks, and it's not there. I'm concerned that the authority find a way to convince the government, given the kind of money they need or given the right in the bill of 1996, to let them become self-sustaining. I'm hoping they will.

Again I speak of Mr Walter as a person with great skill and ability. I'm hoping he'll find a way to make sure this authority continues to be funded in a way that gives us all some confidence they will be able to afford the kind of personnel that will be required to go out there and do the inspections, write up the reports and make sure the proper authorities are contacted when that is necessary, so that we can all sleep well at night, knowing that we are safe, that these devices are safe and that when we go and take an elevator, spend a weekend at Canada's Wonderland or buy toys for our children, those things are being overseen by people who are professionals, who are being paid accordingly, who have the time to do their job and that there are enough of them to do the full job that is required.

I'll turn it over now to my colleague from Timmins-James Bay who has a few things to put on the record. Then I believe we're going to be moving to a vote on this and we will be supportive.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James) : je vais avoir la chance d'expliquer un peu une difficulté qu'on a eue avec ce projet de loi quand le gouvernement a transféré la responsabilité pour l'établissement des certificats à la TSSA. J'ai été contacté la première fois depuis l'automne passé par un M. André Rhéaume, qui est responsable de certains programmes d'apprentissage qui ont lieu au Collège Boréal de Hearst. Comme vous le savez, la communauté de Hearst, qui est dans mon comté, a non seulement le Collège Boréal, mais aussi le Collège universitaire de Hearst qui est établi là-bas. Comme on le sait à Hearst, 99 % du monde dans cette communauté sont francophones qui demeurent en français, qui travaillent en français et qui font leur vie quotidienne en français dans la région. L'industrie primaire dans le coin est la foresterie : Columbia Forest Products, Tembec, Lecours Lumber, et autres dans les lieux qui sont des entreprises assez grandes dans le sens qu'elles emploient jusqu'à 300, 400 personnes par moulin.

Le langage—c'est le point que je veux faire—de la communauté de cette région est le français. Cela veut dire que c'est non seulement à la maison qu'on parle français mais aussi quand on s'en va à l'école, finalement quand on va au secondaire, quand on fait le collège, l'université, et éventuellement quand on arrive au marché du travail le langage du travail est le français. Un problème qu'on a vu à travers ce projet de loi, c'est que les francophones dans la région de Hearst, comme les autres francophones soit à Sault Ste Marie ou à Toronto

ou n'importe où, à Prescott-Russell ou à Ottawa, quand ils allaient écrire leur examen—

Une voix.

M. Bisson : Ottawa est un petit village droit à côté de Nepean. Il m'a demandé où c'est. On rit un peu des fois à l'Assemblée.

Pour revenir au débat, on a trouvé une solution. J'ai été contacté la première fois par M. André Rhéaume du Collège Boréal, je pense, l'automne passé. Il m'a dit qu'il avait un apprenti qui a pris le programme je crois des « boilermakers », « stationary engineer »—je ne me rappelle pas le terme français au juste. Il avait pris son programme, il avait fait l'apprentissage, il avait fait toutes les études nécessaires au Collège Boréal et il était prêt à écrire son examen.

Le monsieur ne parle pas l'anglais. C'est son choix. On peut demeurer en français en Ontario. On n'a pas besoin d'apprendre l'anglais si on ne veut pas. Quand il était là pour écrire l'examen avec la TSSA, qui est l'agence privée responsable de tenir les examens, ils ont refusé de donner l'examen en français.

On m'a contacté en tant que député local, nous avons contacté la TSSA, on a fait des recherches et on s'est fait dire qu'il n'y a pas l'obligation, à travers ce projet de loi, de donner l'examen en français. À partir de ce point-là avec M. Rhéaume et avec le personnel dans mon bureau de comté, on a commencé à faire des démarches pour savoir comment ça avait changé depuis le temps que le ministère, eux, avaient la responsabilité de donner ces examens et que la TSSA a pris la responsabilité. Qu'est-ce qui est différent ?

Des employés du ministère provincial, qui sont responsables de l'entretien du système de certification, m'ont dit que si un francophone rentrait au bureau pour écrire son examen, lui ou elle avait toujours le droit de faire ça en français. Si l'examen n'était pas disponible, le ministère ferait une de trois choses : premièrement, il donnerait l'occasion d'avoir quelqu'un qui pourrait vous lire les questions en anglais, les traduire en français, et vous pourriez écrire vos réponses ; ou il s'organiserait pour s'assurer d'avoir, pour un examen donné en français, si vous voulez revenir sur un point, la chance dans le ministère d'en faire la traduction. C'est ce qu'on m'a dit à beaucoup de reprises quand j'ai parlé à de différentes personnes qui avaient travaillé pour le ministère des années avant la TSSA.

On a recontacté la TSSA ici à Toronto. Je n'ai pas la lettre avec moi, mais les lettres que j'ai reçues m'ont confirmé qu'eux ne voulaient pas donner le service en français, et qu'ils voyaient qu'ils n'avaient pas l'obligation de le faire.

Un amendement que je voudrais voir au projet de loi, une fois en comité, c'est un amendement qui assure que les francophones allant écrire leur examen vont avoir le droit premièrement d'être capables de l'écrire en français, et si l'examen n'est pas disponible, qu'on aide à en écrire un, mais pas une traduction. Ce n'est pas la même affaire, ça, comme on le sait bien. C'est tout un autre débat. Un examen en français ou, le moindre des moins,

que quelqu'un s'assiera là pour lire la question en anglais et en fera la traduction pour que la personne puisse écrire l'examen pour avoir la certification. C'est une demande que je fais.

As well, we have found through this particular experience that Ontario is a multicultural society. Not everybody within the province has English skills to the degree that they're able to go in and write an exam in English. Many new Canadians who are tradespeople from different parts of the world, as there are members of this assembly who have come from different parts of the world, got their certification in their home country. When they come to Ontario by way of immigration and want to be able to go out and write the exam, they have been barred from doing so by the TSSA. There was a provision, when the Ministry of Skills Development used to run the certification programs for things like pressure vessel people, stationary engineers 1 through 5, people who did pressure welding, all those types of certifications. If you wanted to write your exam and your English was maybe OK but not good enough to read and write, but you were stronger in Italian because that was your mother tongue, you were able to ask that somebody come in and translate the questions so that you properly understood the question so that you could write the exam and write the answers in a way that reflected your understanding of the question. So it didn't matter if you were Italian; it didn't matter what language you were speaking coming in; you had the right to request an interpreter to at least interpret the English exam in your own tongue so that you were able to write the exam and get your Ontario certification. That is what the provincial government used to provide. Now with the TSSA, as is my understanding from the research that we did, you are no longer able to do that. I think that's a disservice.

There's a whole issue, especially here in the Toronto area and, I would argue, in the Ottawa region, as well as Windsor, Hamilton, many southern Ontario communities, where the reality is that we are a multicultural society that has people from all over the world who emigrate here, and they have skills when they come here. I don't think we should be barring new Canadians entry into some of the skilled professions on the basis of them not being able to understand the written questions being asked when they go to write their trade certification. So one of the other issues we have to take a look at is not only the services for French-speaking individuals who live in Ontario but also for others who are trying to write their trade certifications who are able to read and speak

English OK but not well enough, quite frankly, to understand the questions in a way that would allow them to get a passing grade. I look forward to this bill going to committee so that we're able to raise those two particular issues and hopefully find ways of forcing the TSSA to do the right thing and provide that type of training.

The last point I'm going to make, and only for 30 seconds, is I don't like the idea of what the government has done here with the TSSA. I would much rather have seen those services stay within the confines of the provincial government. I believe the provincial government has a responsibility to provide services to its citizens. I believe sincerely that government can do that better than the private sector and what I have demonstrated just now by way of this debate is an example of just how often the private sector doesn't get it right when it comes to providing many services that are better given by the public sector. I would much rather have seen this stay within the public purview.

With that, I would like thank you for this opportunity to raise those points.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate? Mr O'Toole has an opportunity to rebut.

Hon Mrs Marland: Did you think I was doing a two-minute rebuttal?

The Deputy Speaker: No, I thought you were just standing up to take another picture.

Mr O'Toole has moved second reading of Bill 42. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The motion is carried.

The bill will be referred for third reading.

Hon Mrs Marland: I would ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: So be it.

Hon Mrs Marland: Is there a call for orders of the day? I was going to move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: No, there isn't. I'm going to adjourn. It being almost 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

Interjection: No, 6:45.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, I'm sorry, 6:45 tonight. I won't be here, but 6:45 tonight for the rest of you guys.

The House adjourned at 1755.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Première session, 37^e législature

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Wednesday 10 May 2000

Mercredi 10 mai 2000



**Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr**

**Président
L'honorable Gary Carr**

**Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 mai 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAXPAYER DIVIDEND ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE VERSEMENT D'UN DIVIDENDE AUX CONTRIBUABLES

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 9, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 72, An Act to pay a dividend to Ontario taxpayers, cut taxes, create jobs and implement the Budget / Projet de loi 72, Loi visant à verser un dividende aux contribuables de l'Ontario, à réduire les impôts, à créer des emplois et à mettre en oeuvre le budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Brian Coburn): Further debate.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Congratulations on your promotion to the Speaker's chair for this evening.

It's more than polite for me to say what a pleasure it is to speak on the Taxpayer Dividend Act. Bill 72 is certainly one that's going to go down in history. It's a result of the budget, a budget to be celebrated, a budget we can all be very proud of, particularly those of us who were elected in 1995 and have carried this through.

It was a very ambitious agenda that we set with the Common Sense Revolution back in 1995, one to reduce taxes, reduce spending, and at the same time reduce the deficit and balance the budget. I think there was more than one on our side of the House who wondered, "Is this really going to happen?" As we watched a year and then two years get under our belt, there was absolutely no question.

The argument is over that tax cuts create jobs. They've created horrendous numbers of jobs in Ontario. There's all kinds of proof. You can look at how Ontario is leading all the other provinces and is leading all the G7 countries. You can look at what happened to Canada in the early 1990s when there were high taxes, at how 150,000 net jobs were created in the rest of Canada while Ontario went behind in net jobs. It was the right thing to do. There were a lot of economists who believed in this policy and, lo and behold, they were absolutely right.

This bill is really about our plan to make Ontario a better place to work, live and raise a family. There's no question that this plan is there to promote prosperity in

Ontario, and it has been very successful at that. As we look back at those lost 10 years, from 1985 to 1995, that was a period when disposable income plummeted, dropped right out of sight. Even though people were getting increases in their salaries, they kept saying, "I work harder and harder and at the end of the year, at the end of the day, whatever, I have less money to spend than I did last year."

In 1995 we were elected basically on a policy whereby the party being elected to form the government believed that taxpayers' money really belonged to the taxpayers, that it did not belong to the government. That's a different philosophy from what has been in Ontario in the past.

With this bill, it will be giving direction that the taxpayers of Ontario will be receiving a dividend of some \$200 maximum. A very large number of the taxpayers in Ontario will be receiving that \$200. Of course, it ranges from \$25 up to \$200, depending on the level of tax they have been paying. This in itself recognizes that the money belongs to the people of Ontario, that it does not belong to the government. There will be a cheque; they will be receiving a cheque of up to \$200 in the not-too-distant future.

That's a significant amount of money. In my riding there are plans for a new hospital to be built in the west end and they're building one in the east end. What a great place to be able to donate the money. I think I've seen upwards of 20 suggestions of how the government might have spent that money better, but who in Ontario can put it in the right spot other than the taxpayers of Ontario? They can go out and donate it to a political party like the other side of the House here. You might be very pleased to donate it to your party, or you may want to donate it to your church or a food bank, whatever. It's your choice how you will use that \$200. Once it's spent, that's going to help, once again, stimulate the economy and keep that wheel revolving. It's just one more step in making sure that economy is stimulated.

Another thing that we did in the budget that's involved in this bill is reduce the corporate taxes. I'll tell you, there's no better way to kill jobs any place than to increase taxes, and that was what was going on. So we've got corporate taxes going down. Actually, we were in a position where our corporate taxes were higher than in any of the states. When this plan to reduce corporate taxes is fully implemented, we will be below the average of the states around the Great Lakes.

As we look at this whole package of tax cuts, really what we're talking about are promises made, promises

kept. That was well known on the streets in small-town Ontario during the last election campaign: that we did in fact keep our promises. Maybe some people didn't exactly like some of the things we were doing, but we were keeping our promises, and one of those promises was the 30% cut in income tax. By 1999, the time of the last election, that had been totally delivered and was creating one tremendous stimulus to the economy of Ontario. This bill, as well as last week's budget, will be honouring our commitment from back in 1999 to more tax cuts, and it's going to create a climate of economic growth even greater than we have had in the past.

Since this budget has been passed, I've had the opportunity to talk to many of my constituents, particularly members of the chambers of commerce, and you just can't believe how enthused those people are with this budget and what it's going to do to the economy in their respective communities. The response has been overwhelmingly favourable and I'm sure that you've noticed that as well, Mr Speaker. These people really do appreciate the fact that we're giving their money back to them. It just makes so much sense. By doing this, it's going to lure more jobs, more investment into our province. When I was chatting with people, they were saying they really appreciate the fact that we are indeed keeping our promise.

There's a young man in my constituency whom I was recently having a conversation with. This young person is just nicely out of university and he's really benefiting from the strong economy that's present in Ontario. We got to talking about politics and about government, and in that conversation he was telling me how much respect he had gained for Mike Harris and the Harris government because we do keep the promises we make, but how disappointed he was in the federal Liberal government and how they make promises just to get elected and then they collapse. They ignore their platform and on they go. He was noticing how the Harris team had implemented the Common Sense Revolution, and he believed that we would continue to implement the Blueprint that we campaigned on back in 1999.

He went on to tell me the story about when he was really converted and really believed in the direction that he should look at in politics. It goes along the line that he was listening to Mr Chrétien on a radio interview program back in the latter part of their first term and he was going on about how he never intended to scrap the GST. The interviewer sort of flicked the switch to the 1993 campaign when Chrétien said, "If I'm elected, I will scrap the GST." And he's on this interview program saying that he never intended to do that. Talk about double-talk. You know, this is most unfortunate, that we would have a Prime Minister in our country who would do that kind of thing.

Unfortunately, the member from Hamilton ended up having to step down and run again. Maybe the Prime Minister should have done the same thing. But we understand that somebody has to be the fall person, and in this case she did just that. But this story shows just how much

people in my riding appreciate a government that follows through and does exactly what it says it's going to do. That's what this bill is about: keeping the promises of lowering taxes and stimulating economic prosperity here in Ontario.

I've just told you a story about how one of my constituents got turned off the Chrétien Liberals because of one position he took and then didn't follow through on scrapping the GST. I can go through a whole litany of things that they committed to but didn't do and how effective those spin doctors have been in trying to position him as a good Liberal. We recently heard about him over in the Middle East, and what a disastrous trip that was, an embarrassment to all Canadians. But what else can you expect, especially when you see an article in the Toronto Sun on May 4 where Chrétien is trying to take credit for the budget being balanced in Ontario? This is a man who, along with his Minister of Finance, laughed at our policy of tax cuts to stimulate the economy, to create jobs and to cut the deficit, all at the same time. He said it's not just possible. It was just a few years ago that he laughed, but then, "Chrétien and his finance minister, Paul Martin, claimed yesterday Tory Premier Mike Harris and his Finance minister, Ernie Eves, simply borrowed the federal play book for their good-news surplus budget."

Well, they just laughed about it a few years ago. It goes on to say that "Martin said Ontario's Tories not only copied"—copied—"the federal Grit plan, including eliminating the deficit and reducing taxes for low- and middle-income earners." They didn't even start talking about cutting taxes until last year and they're trying to claim that we copied them?

Then it goes on to say, "The Prime Minister said that the 'best form of flattery is when a government is copying another government.'" Now, I think he must have meant when the federal Liberals were copying the Ontario Conservatives, but he's trying to take credit here when credit certainly is not in order.

It goes on to say, "Martin told the Sun Tuesday he may give special surplus tax refund cheques to Canadians in future budgets, along the lines of the rebates of up to \$200 Eves promised in his budget." The next day he said it was a bad idea, and then later on he's saying it's a pretty good idea. I'm not sure which way the wind happened to be blowing that one particular day, but obviously he's rather confused.

With this doublespeak I tend to think of George Orwell's book entitled 1984. You know, these fabrications—the Prime Minister should be absolutely ashamed of himself. It's like an Orwellian effort to rewrite history and it's absolutely scary. It sounds like he's saying the Prime Minister's office should be renamed the Ministry of Truth. Orwell's novel 1984 placed the word "Newspeak" into the English dictionary. In the book, Newspeak was a way for the state to narrow the range of thought. Perhaps we should talk about Liberalspeak. It will become a common word in our country with what

Chrétien and the Liberals are doing. It's most unfortunate.

I want to send a very clear message to Mr Chrétien: You have done absolutely nothing to promote prosperity in Ontario and to help us balance the budget. Anybody here or anybody in Ottawa, name me one fiscal policy that the federal government brought out to help balance the budget—just one. I might be able to come up with one, and that would be reducing the transfer payments to the province of Ontario. But after that I can't think of a single thing that they have done to help balance the budget. I would suggest what we have been doing with cutting taxes—payroll taxes, income taxes—is what has stimulated the economy in Ontario, the economic engine that drives Canada, and I would suggest that is the reason the federal government managed to balance their budget—for no other reason than a small bit there on taking dollars away from the provinces, particularly the province of Ontario, and then watching what's going on in Alberta and criticizing Klein for what he's trying to do: survive with a health program that they are just cutting the guts right out of. I think that is most unfortunate.

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What does the federal government believe in other than high taxes? That's exactly what they were doing during their previous term, increasing payroll taxes, like the Canada pension plan and employment insurance premiums, which is most unfortunate. We know that tax cuts create jobs. We know that with increased taxes we lose jobs, or they cut the number of jobs we have out there.

What is really unfortunate—and the federal Liberals should be absolutely ashamed of themselves—are the cuts they have created in health care. I think it's really exciting that Tom Kent, the godfather of social policy for the Liberals, came before a federal committee—and this is reported in the *Ottawa Citizen*.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Isn't he a Mulroney Conservative?

Mr Galt: No, he's a Liberal. You should know that, member for St Catharines. It says here that he's a "Liberal icon."

"Tom Kent says the federal government—not two-tier medicine or Alberta Premier Ralph Klein—is the biggest threat to the future of medicare."

"Mr Kent said yesterday the Chrétien government is starving the public health system of badly needed cash, and holding up any chance of meaningful reform negotiations with the provinces."

This is a Liberal talking to the Liberals. He was one who developed health care in the first place, a health care program that was supposed to be the federal government 50-50 with the provincial governments.

"He made his comments while testifying before a Senate committee explaining the future of medicare. Mr Kent, 78, is the Liberals' social policy godfather who helped spearhead the creation of programs such as medicare back in the 1960s...."

"The main attacks on medicare haven't come from two-tier medicine or Ralph Klein," Mr Kent told senators.

Rather, he said, the problem is that successive federal governments have steadily 'dishonoured' the commitment made in the 1960s to share the costs of medicare with the provinces. The commitment was 'completely tossed out' when federal Finance Minister Paul Martin slashed health care transfers in his 1995 budget and changed the way the money is sent to the provinces, he said.

"Mr Kent said the only way to begin fixing the ailing health system is to dramatically boost federal funding, and to do so in such a way that the provinces will know they can count on federal financing to keep pace with rising health care costs."

This is a Liberal talking to the Liberals. You would think they'd get the message.

"Right now, he complained, the provinces must rely on a 'federal whim' for help in paying the bills of the \$60-billion public health system." He goes on to comment, "It's essential to restore federal integrity."

I laugh when I see that put together "Liberal integrity."

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): It's an oxymoron.

Mr Galt: Yes, it's an oxymoron. You're absolutely right.

"Since the February 28 budget, federal-provincial relations have soured over the issue of health care." It's not surprising. It goes on to comment that the federal government only contributes 13 cents of every dollar spent in health and social programs. It's not quite that good in Ontario.

It goes on: "Yesterday, Mr Kent," and this is a Liberal, "sided with the provinces, saying the federal government's attempt to 'inflate' its contributions by including tax points is a 'silly argument.'"

"To claim that those taxes that the provinces levy themselves—even now, a quarter of century later—are still a federal contribution is absolute nonsense." He mentions the 50-50 share that was originally agreed to. They never did do that. The most the feds ever gave was 41%. He goes on to say it should be increased in the neighbourhood of 25% shared at least by the federal government, and then the provinces should "be able to rely on a consistent federal share."

That kind of thing discourages people in politics, particularly in Ontario. The federal Liberals don't even believe in the Canada Health Act. It's obvious because of the way they fund it. I don't think there's any question that if they believed in it, they would be funding it properly. But obviously they must not believe in the federal health care act.

See what's going on in Alberta—I believe it's Bill 11. Name me a province where there isn't strife in health care. Is that the fault of the provinces? Are all the provinces bad, or is it the fault of the federal government in how it's being funded? It's my understanding there was supposed to be a meeting at the end of May, a federal-provincial conference of ministers of health. What is Rock suggesting: that maybe they could have their

meeting in Yellowknife—to sort of get out of sight and away from reporters so they can do it in secret or something, I think.

I'm very supportive of Bill 72, the Taxpayer Dividend Act. It's an opportunity for people in Ontario to get their dollars back. It's very exciting to see a balanced budget in Ontario for two years in a row.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Comments and questions?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I was just listening to the member for Northumberland. I could say, like I saw in the paper on May 3, "Your cheques are in the mail." The phone has started to ring, but people really think it's a joke. It's really Tory propaganda. Some people will probably get \$25. The majority won't get anything but probably a letter in the mail from the Tory party asking them for a donation, and the people will think, "Give me a donation and I'll send you a cheque for \$200." That's the way the government is working.

When we look at this \$200 maximum—a few will be getting a \$200-cheque in the mail, but very few. When we speak to business people, they think that money should have gone to the debt. Other people say, we should have put that into health care. In my area, they're saying they should invest a little more in the school system, because we're planning to close 130 schools in rural areas.

When I look at the \$4-billion personal income tax cut announced on May 2, I think that people are not fooled. They know that even though this government is showing a \$1.4-billion increase in health care, it is not true. You are trying to fool the people, but today people are too smart. In my area they already know. They tell us: "We don't expect a cheque, but you can expect your phone to ring after September if we don't receive a cheque. Mr Harris says we'll be getting a cheque."

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I listened with interest to the comments by the member from Northumberland. It's always interesting to listen to him speak. He is one of the more colourful speakers they have on that side of the House. I was wondering, as I listened to the comments by the member about this budget. Basically he was trying to say that the government was following through on its promises, that somehow or other this budget proves the government kept its word to the voters both in 1995 and 1999.

I remember the election of 1995 very well. I remember that your government—the third party, at the time—ran an election where you made some promises, and those promises were broken. I remember specifically in the Common Sense Revolution that you said not one cent would come out of education. They've taken far more—

Mr Bradley: And no hospitals will close.

Mr Bisson: I'm getting there. There were many more promises.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: Wait your turn. I'll tell you the ones that were broken.

In education, they've certainly taken more than a penny. They've literally taken hundreds of millions of dollars out of education. They try to jumble the numbers around in all kinds of ways, but when you go to the classroom and take a look at the amount of money we have with the new funding formula, there are fewer dollars available for students. There is hardly anything left when it comes to special needs education.

They said they weren't going to cut in health care. How many hospitals have they closed in Ontario? How many budgets have they cut—

Mr Bradley: Twenty-five.

Mr Bisson: They've closed 25 hospitals in Ontario. They've gone ahead and reduced the budgets of a number of hospitals, except for the one where they're about to have the by-election. They've basically made sure to decimate the budget within the Ministry of Health. Those are promises you made that you said you were going to keep when you ran in 1995, but you've broken those promises since then, so I don't hold you to your word on what you're doing in this budget.

1910

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I'm pleased to rise, first of all, to commend my colleague from Northumberland for his very succinct exposition of a budget that is historical in this province. For the first time in 30 years we presented the people of this province with a truly balanced budget.

I want to speak very briefly to the comments made by the coach of our legislative hockey team, the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. He said that there are many people in his riding who would want to have the \$200, which is really their money, go to so many different areas. He mentioned that some people would like to see it go to education; others would like to see it go to the debt; others would like to see it go to health care. It speaks precisely to the fact of why we returned this tax money to the taxpayer. Now they can do with that money what they feel the priorities are, because our government fundamentally believes that the taxpayers know best what to do with their money. For those who want to contribute it to charity, they should do so. For those who want to apply it to the debt, my recommendation to the Minister of Finance is that we should put an endorsement on the back of the cheque and allow people to redirect that money to go to the debt of our province. Let's allow the taxpayers of our province to direct the money where it is best applied.

With regard to the comment that there is nothing in this budget for education, \$270 million in new dollars to the education budget of our province is not something to be taken lightly. It's a significant investment in education in this new budget.

Mr Bradley: What I was looking for was where in the budget it explains you're going to spend \$11 million for the two brand new King aircraft for the comfort and

convenience of the Premier and members of the cabinet. Maybe some of the backbenchers will have a chance once in a while to hitch a ride on it if they're really good. If they give speeches the way the member for Northumberland gave a speech and really make up to the Premier, they might get a ride on this aircraft. But you know, a lot of people don't know the government bought these aircraft, because the announcement was made just before the Easter weekend, late on the Thursday afternoon, just when they were putting out a press release on the Ontario Realty Corp, yet another embarrassing press release on that. What I'm concerned about is that the people don't know just how luxurious these aircraft are. There are supposed to be nice white leather seats, well-appointed, a bar in there.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Ashtrays, too.

Mr Bradley: Ashtrays. That shouldn't happen. This is for the comfort and convenience of the Premier and members of the cabinet. It's almost an imperial cabinet these days. I understand they're going to have to check with Guy Giorno, who's going to have a list of who's allowed on the aircraft.

Hon Mr Klees: Guy's leaving.

Mr Bradley: He's leaving, but I would predict that Guy Giorno gets a job that pays a lot of money, just like a lot of other people who have left the Premier's office and gone on to paradise in other areas, where they're making six-figure salaries—and those six figures are big figures.

I just wondered whether the member had mentioned those aircraft. I thought the others were fine. They seemed to be operating fine in the province of Ontario. But you know, some people become spoiled. They get in the second term of office and they think the people out there aren't watching. But I'll tell you, there are a lot of people watching tonight who are going to be very concerned about those new luxurious aircraft for the Premier and the cabinet.

The Acting Speaker: Two-minute response, member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: I have to compliment the member for Oak Ridges for his brilliant observations on the earlier presentation that I made.

Looking at some of the other comments, the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell talking about a joke—the only joke that has been around this place recently was when we had that unholy alliance from 1985 to 1987. That was truly a joke in this Legislature. Then to add to that joke, we had a Liberal government that doubled spending in about three years. And then what did the NDP do? They doubled the debt in five years. That's the kind of joke that has been around here.

I listened to the member for Timmins-James Bay, and I appreciate his kind comments, but I do want to walk through some of the education confusion that he seems to have. We certainly have increased the education spending significantly. When we took over from your government, you were at \$12.9 billion. That's what we spent

that year. That has increased to \$13.4-billion-plus this year. That is hardly cutting education spending.

In the budget, there is \$101 million for another thousand elementary teachers; \$70 million for reading support for junior kindergarten to grade 3; another \$70 million for special ed, added on to the \$40 million that the Minister of Education had announced earlier. This is an increase three years in a row, and that's a 12% increase in special ed; another \$162 million for smaller class sizes in secondary schools; another \$23 million in transportation; another \$25 million for remediation; another \$5 million for teacher training. This just goes on.

When I see all this spending, I get a little nervous that it almost sounds like the Liberals, and it really upsets me. Sometimes, spending this quantity of money, I think about how you people were spending. But it's being spent very wisely.

Mr Bradley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to get unanimous consent from members of the House to recommend that the member for Northumberland get a ride in this new aircraft after that speech.

The Acting Speaker: I don't think that's a point of order. We'll move to the next speaker.

Mr Phillips: I'm pleased to continue the debate on the bill, and I thank the members for allowing me to delay my remarks until this evening. It happened that last night the chief of police, Chief Fantino, had a community meeting that I, as well as Ms Mushinski and others, thought was important to be at. I appreciate the chance to deliver my remarks tonight.

There are, as I think we know, four major elements in the bill, although they're not the only four. There are the substantial changes in the corporate tax, the small business tax, income tax and the \$1-billion Harris mailing.

I just want to begin the discussion on the tax cuts by saying I think Ontario should recognize there's about \$8 billion worth of tax cuts here. That is an enormous level of tax cuts. About \$4 billion of it is corporate tax cuts. The government has decided it will cut corporate taxes in this province essentially in half. I understand why the government says it's going to do that. It is \$4 billion of forgone revenue. It will, I might say, put us, according to the budget, substantially lower in corporate taxes than the neighbouring jurisdictions, and the budget makes a big thing about that. So it's \$4 billion.

The reason I raise this is because this is a statement about the priorities of a government and how we want to run our province. There's another \$1.2 billion of tax cuts for capital gains. Generally speaking, they would be gains that one would make in the stock market. The government has decided that it will cut about \$1.2 billion worth of taxes out of that area. I might say that this tends, without question, to benefit the better-off in our society. I know Bay Street is very happy about that. There's another \$3-billion cut in personal income taxes, so it's about \$8 billion, quite apart from the \$1-billion refund. By the way, the personal income tax for people making over \$250,000 a year—the combined tax break here is \$800 million. The government has decided: "There's a

priority area. We will cut taxes to the tune of \$800 million for people making more than \$250,000." So this is a budget about priorities.

From our side, we think that's \$8 billion in tax cuts—and I'll talk about this later—when in fact we are spending less money today than we invested five years ago in our colleges and in our universities; we are spending less money today than we invested five years ago in our colleges and in our universities. We are spending less money now, provincial support money, for elementary and secondary than we spent two years ago, when you take into account that the government said, "We're going to cut the education property tax and replace it with provincial grants." They haven't done that.

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I think the government has said repeatedly: "We believe we should be spending more money on health care, but we can't get the money from the federal government," but they can cut taxes by \$8 billion. So this is a discussion about priorities, and clearly this budget reflects the Harris priorities in the province. They are not our priorities, and I'll talk about that as we go along.

The member for Northumberland spent a fair bit of time talking about the finances. Let's recognize that in the province of Ontario we now have a balanced budget, but seven other provinces balanced their budgets before Ontario did. Quebec balanced its budget a year before Ontario did. The federal government balanced its budget two years before Ontario did. And, I might add, the day that Harris became Premier, both Quebec and the federal government had substantially larger deficits as a percentage of the gross domestic product than Ontario. So they were in worse shape, but they balanced the budget.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: I know the member for Northumberland likes to—he may want to listen, because he may learn something.

So finally the provincial government balanced its budget. All you've got to do, people of Ontario, is look at the budget. Mike Harris added \$24 billion to the debt of the province of Ontario in his first four years, and that's straight out of the budget. When he became Premier, the debt of this province was \$90 billion; today it's \$114 billion—\$24 billion. And we say, "Well, we needed the tax cut." Of that \$24 billion, \$10 billion was borrowed money to pay for the tax cut. And so I say to all of Ontario, yes, you got your tax cut. Mike Harris has added \$24 billion to the debt of this province, \$10 billion of that for the tax cut. So Mike Harris says—

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): So how are you going to spend your tax cut?

Mr Phillips: Well, now the Minister of Education, who said that they would increase spending for elementary and secondary education and hasn't done it because they want to cut taxes for corporations and for capital gains—\$8-billion worth of taxes—you should be looking after the elementary and secondary students of Ontario instead of cheerleading for another \$8 billion of tax cuts.

I say to the people of Ontario that, yes, we now have a balanced budget. By the way, just as a small aside, the budget finally recognizes that there was a balanced budget 10 years ago. The budget itself finally says that, in spite of the fact that Harris would like to say otherwise. "After a decade of deficits, Ontario is now on track" to balance its budget. In other words, there was a balanced budget a decade ago. That's what Mike Harris says in the budget.

And so I say to Ontarians that, yes, we now have a balanced budget, but Quebec, which was in a much worse position than Ontario when Mike Harris became Premier, beat Ontario by a year. The federal government beat Ontario by two years. There were seven provinces with balanced budgets, and no, we wouldn't do that because we had to have the tax cut. Premier Harris would say, "We needed it to get the economy going." Well, let me say this: The most important reason why Ontario has been growing is exports. There is no doubt of that.

It was instructive to listen to the chief economist at the Bank of Montreal very recently when asked the question: "Well, haven't the Harris tax cuts been what's driving Ontario's economy? Isn't that why we borrowed \$10 billion, to drive the Ontario economy?" The answer was no. This is what Mr O'Neill, the chief economist at the Bank of Montreal, said: "I don't think they have been a major influence in stimulating the economy. If you look at the growth in the Ontario economy over the last five years ... by far the dominant influences have been the US economy and the exchange rate."

I would say every single economist who appeared before our prebudget hearings—every single one—said the most important factor driving the Ontario economy is exports. And so I say to Ontario: Yes, we've got a balanced budget finally. We've added \$24 billion to the debt. And by the way—this is instructive—there are organizations that are paid money to rate the credit worthiness of companies and governments. I remember when Mike Harris was the opposition leader and Ontario's credit rating was downgraded three times under the NDP. Mike Harris was going ballistic. He said it was an embarrassment. Well, I'll tell you, five years later we still have the same credit rating Bob Rae had when he left office. It hasn't been upgraded. Why? Because the credit rating agencies know that you don't get your fiscal house in order by cutting taxes before you've got it in order.

I would suspect the Minister of Finance, if he hasn't already, will be on the plane to New York begging to get the credit rating upgraded, and after five years I certainly hope we finally can. But what has been driving the Ontario economy, without a question of a doubt, is exports. If we don't accept that and understand that—the budget itself points that out. It says this about exports, and this is a measure of how important exports have become to the Ontario economy: Ten years ago, in 1989, exports represented 29% of Ontario's gross domestic product. Today it is 55%.

And so I say, with all due respect to Premier Harris, the economists and the budget itself would say that rather

than making his arm sore patting himself on the back, he should have been patting President Clinton on the back because it is a function of the US economy continuing to grow dramatically that has allowed our economy to grow dramatically. If you can find any independent economist who would disagree with that statement, bring them on forward, because we haven't seen them. The government appointed two economists to come to the prebudget hearings and they said the same thing. They all said the same thing: It is exports driving the Ontario economy. By the way, I would say it is the auto sector that particularly has been driving it.

It's important to focus on this—in fact, I happen to think it's the most important economic issue facing us. I think health care and education are extremely important, but in terms of the economy it is, how do we deal with the fact that we are now the most export-oriented jurisdiction in the industrial world? And that's again from the budget. Nobody relies on exports like we do. But what does it mean?

The first thing I'd say is that when the government is looking to attract investment to Ontario, what do they say about Ontario? What do they say is important? Well, the first thing they say is that Ontario is one of North America's most peaceful and secure communities and that our remarkable health care and education systems are publicly funded and open to everyone. And it goes on in this document to point out many of the key reasons for investing in Ontario. Here's a key one: US manufacturers pay, on average, more than \$3,100 per employee for the kind of health care coverage provided by Canada's publicly supported system, whereas Ontario employers pay only about \$540 per employee in employer health care. You can see there a \$2,500 advantage in Ontario's costs for health care. But how do we fund that? There's no magic in it. As the document says, our health care system is publicly funded. We have collectively chosen that we will pay taxes to fund a publicly funded health care system, fundamentally different from the United States. It is perhaps the most defining thing about Canada. Certainly if it isn't the most, it's one of the most. But let's watch what we're doing. That can only be funded from our tax system, but now we've chosen to say we have to get our taxes down lower than our neighbouring jurisdictions.

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In fact, it is instructive that we now find in the budget that when we're talking about tax rates, it isn't in comparison to other provinces. This is on page 161 in the budget: Ontario's commercial income tax rate. The only comparisons are to the neighbouring jurisdictions, to the States; not to Manitoba, not to Quebec but to the States. That is now where our focus is, and I dare say the Harris government pays far more attention to the tax rates in Michigan, Indiana and New York and has a closer relationship perhaps with the governors there than with our provincial counterparts. As a matter of fact, the idea of the tax rebate came not from some other province but came from Governor Ventura—Jesse "The Body" Ventura—in Minnesota and Tom Ridge in Pennsylvania.

That's where the idea came from. In fact, it was on the front page of the New York Times several weeks before the budget. So this was not, dare I say, made in Ontario; it was made in the Republican governors' conventions.

Back to the exports, because in my mind we now are on a path where we are going to look at either matching taxes or being lower in taxes than our neighbouring jurisdiction. In fact, the budget proudly points out, "When Ontario's proposed corporate income tax rate cuts are fully implemented ... Ontario's combined federal-provincial rate ... would be about 10 percentage points lower than the current corporate income tax rates in nearby competing states." That's 10 percentage points, not 10%. It is like 25% lower than neighbouring jurisdictions.

If we believe, as we in the Liberal Party do, that fundamental to our Ontario, to our Canadian fabric, is a publicly funded, universally accessible health care system, it is impossible to sustain that if we're on a policy of, our taxes are going to have to meet or beat the US. Furthermore, it is ironic that corporations say and the government says, "Listen, an enormous advantage in locating in Ontario; you save money on health care, and then you're also going to pay dramatically lower taxes than your competitors in the US." It starts us very quickly on to a road of substantial problems in sustaining our fundamental health care system.

I go back to the finances. Yes, we now have a balanced budget. I say again that the Harris government crossed the line, ninth out of 11. It's no particular sense of pride that we now have a balanced budget. The government has indicated we've added \$24 billion—that's almost 25%, an enormous amount—to our debt. The measurement of that is that over the next four years the government has told us they may reduce the debt by \$5 billion—add \$24 billion in the first four years, and they may reduce it by \$5 billion over the next four to five years.

I thought I would spend just another couple of moments on this document, on, why should you invest here in Ontario? I mentioned the health care portion. It points with pride to other things. It says that tuition fees for law, medicine, computer sciences and electrical engineering are much lower than at American universities. The business schools of the U of T and Western have been ranked very well. It shows you a chart of tuition fees in Ontario versus our neighbouring jurisdictions. Of interest is that they are from 1997-98. They chose not to have the most recent ones because, as you and I know, the tuition fees have been going up dramatically. So here we are advertising that Ontario's huge advantage is our lower tuition fees at the same time that the government has chosen to take them up.

It also speaks in here about the human development index. It says with pride that the United Nations ranks Canada first in the human development index. How is that index determined? There are five parts to it: life expectancy at birth; adult literacy—one of the first things the government cut was the adult education literacy

program; educational enrolment—mark my words, I guarantee you that as tuition fees rise dramatically, young people coming from families of modest means are not going to not see themselves in that world. I had a young lady in my office, a single parent, who went back to school, got her BA and now has a debt of \$60,000. The banks want that money back, and she can't see her way out. I guarantee you that she will tell her friends of the plight she's in.

As we talk about the things that have made Ontario and Canada unique, why do we rank number one? The life expectancy at birth, adult literacy, educational enrolment and real GDP per capita. By the way, in here is a chart that talks proudly about our low crime rates in Ontario. This is the homicide rate, if anybody can see it at home—or get a budget. The homicide rate in Ontario and the robbery rates are dramatically lower than in neighbouring jurisdictions in the US. I point that out because that has happened for a reason. That hasn't been by accident. In my judgment, as we focus singlemindedly on US-type solutions to dealing with crime we ignore the history that here in Ontario, luckily—thank goodness for it; we should be thankful every day—our crime rate has been dramatically lower than that of the US, and without question it is because we have been prepared, all of us, to invest in young people.

There isn't a young person, historically, who has come from another country to Ontario who hasn't seen that they can go on to post-secondary education, hasn't seen that their family, their mother and father, in desperate times are looked after, are not thrown away. Programs are available for young people. I come as close to guaranteeing as I can that as all of us try to deal with safe and secure communities, if we ignore how we got there, how we got a homicide rate dramatically lower than any major US jurisdiction, how we got crime rates dramatically lower than all the neighbouring jurisdictions, we are making a huge mistake.

I have a strong opinion on how we got there. It was because we created a society where our young people saw that they had another avenue. We are one by one chipping away at those, not the least of which is that we deregulated tuitions. Boy, Bay Street loves it. This is a budget made for Bay Street: capital gains going down to 50%, income taxes dropping, corporate taxes cut in half, 10 percentage points lower than New York. Bay Street could not be happier. The young people of Bay Street can say, "These capital gains will allow me to send my young person on to law school." But for families of modest means, no way. We can say all we want "We'll help them get a loan," but the thought of climbing that loan mountain after you've graduated—I will argue strenuously that committing ourselves, and we are, to \$8 billion of tax cuts—and I'll talk later about the investments we're putting into education—is an enormously sad, missed opportunity.

1940

There's a program on TV that I frankly dislike a lot. It's called Greed. It is a metaphor for what we may be in

now. There's a part there where they have "The Terminator," where you go after one of your teammates and get rid of them. That's the sense I get right now, that it's greed time. I know that it may be very politically popular, and we know that tax cuts sound great, but I will urge Ontario to look behind this budget. My best analogy is that it's like when you're out buying a house. You see this house: It's been painted up; it's got a new roof on it, it looks great. The agent says, "Furthermore, if you buy this thing I'll give you a \$200 cash rebate." But you get in the basement where the foundation is and you find it leaking. It's leaking in the areas where I strongly believe we have and had an opportunity to invest, and we are walking away from it.

Just to talk a little bit about some of the specifics on the tax front, I mentioned before that we've chosen to cut corporate taxes roughly in half. It isn't just matching our neighbours; we've said that we are going to beat them by 10 percentage points. Neighbouring US jurisdictions have combined rates of provincial and federal taxes at around 40%. The combined rate for Ontario now will move to 30%. And, as usual, the attack on the federal government says that if the federal government would just match what the province is doing, it would be 23%. So neighbouring US jurisdictions have a combined corporate tax rate of 40%; Harris would like to get it down to 23%. I understand that, but tell me again how we are going to fund our health care system if we've chosen to have tax rates at half those of the US?

Who are we speaking for here? I have no doubt that the people on Bay Street, with their dramatic cut in income taxes, with their corporate taxes cut in half and with capital gains tax cut from 75% to 50%, will be able to afford health care premiums at whatever they need. That's not an issue for them; it is for our seniors, middle-income people and our young people. Fundamentally, we're talking about the kind of Ontario and Canada we want.

That's why I spent so much time initially highlighting that we now are the most export-oriented jurisdiction in the world. By the way, I welcome exports. I'm thrilled that we are now a hugely export-oriented province—90% to the US. We have an enormously successful auto industry—thank goodness for that—driving the Ontario economy. My only disappointment perhaps in exports is that 10 years ago 85% of our exports went to the US, and today it's 91%, the point being that we have not developed our customer base, our client base, our business around the world. We have focused on the US. So none of my remarks should be interpreted as thinking that we in the Liberal Party don't welcome exports. In fact, we believe we can compete extremely successfully, but we also believe in some of the things this book says: You should locate in Ontario because we have an enormously successful and fine, publicly funded health care system. We have an educational system that everyone had access to in the past. We have a quality of life here that this document highlights. It highlights our safe and secure communities, it highlights our environment, all the things

that, in our judgment, this budget puts at risk as it single-mindedly focuses \$8 billion on tax cuts.

I wanted to talk now a little bit about the things that the budget is unable to do because of the tax cuts. Post-secondary education—this is the jargon we use, but basically colleges and universities—we originally thought have \$200 million less than they had five years ago, but actually, because of the accounting, they'll have \$300 million less than they had five years ago. If there is one thing that our corporate leaders tell us will guarantee future economic success, it is having a well-trained, well-educated workforce. There's an old saying, Mr Speaker, as you know, that the economic well-being of Canada used to be determined by the things that we grew and the things we took out of the ground. Today, that continues to play a role, but increasingly our asset is what's between the ears of our citizens. Yet we've chosen to say, "We're going to spend \$300 million less investing in post-secondary education than we spent five years ago." By the way, 59 other jurisdictions in North America—the US states and all the provinces—have chosen to increase their investments in post-secondary education. But not us.

In our elementary and secondary schools, the government said: "We're going to cut property taxes. We're going to cut education property taxes." It was a big part of the last election. They said: "We're going to cut education property taxes and we'll replace that money. We'll find that from the province." Guess what? They said they cut \$450 million in property taxes, but you won't find that in the provincial budget. They haven't replaced that for elementary and secondary. Dare I say it's a bit of a shell game, where the government will say, "We're going to spend \$100 million here on this and \$100 million there and \$50 million here." Yes, but it's all money that was taken from another part of the budget and put in there.

The third part of the budget is health care. I find the attempt to divert the debate away from the quality of our health care system to who's going to provide the money interesting. It is instructive to me on several fronts, and I might take a moment to talk about it. One is that while Premier Harris was spending \$5 million of taxpayer money, the money of everybody out there, on advertising railing at the federal government "You should be giving us more money," he had \$1 billion in his little vault sitting there. He knew it was there. They told us they've had this money there for months, \$1 billion. He could have, if he believed we should be spending more money on health care, simply taken that \$1 billion and spent it, but no, he spent \$5 million railing at the federal government.

1950

There is an argument about how much money comes from the federal government. I just wanted to put on the record that Premier Harris—Mike Harris at the time—was a member of the government with Frank Miller when they said to Ottawa: "Don't give us any cash. We don't want any cash. All we want is something called tax points." This gets a little bit interesting, but—

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): That's crap.

The Acting Speaker: Withdraw the word. It's not appropriate in the House.

Mr Dunlop: I'm sorry. I withdraw that.

Mr Phillips: Frank Miller himself said the provinces, led by Ontario and Quebec, simply wanted tax room. The federal government insisted on a cash component because it thought tax room was not the right way to go. By the way, in Ontario's books, in what's called the public accounts, they include what's called the tax point transfer. Do you know why Ontario wanted tax points? Because they knew that was in Ontario's best interest and would disadvantage Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, the have-not provinces, "Just give us tax points, then we'll be a lot better off."

The federal government—as it turns out now, maybe foolishly—agreed with Ontario to transfer tax points. Any objective person who looks at it would say that when you include the tax transfers and the cash transfers, Ontario is getting more money today than it did five years ago. I challenge anyone to sit down and look at the numbers and find anything different. As a matter of fact, take a look at your own public accounts, because in there you do admit it.

Furthermore, I remember very well the day the Martin budget came out in 1995. As a matter of fact, the Common Sense Revolution says, "We publicly endorse the cuts." Premier Harris, if anything, said that day: "Well, we publicly endorse them. They don't go far enough." But the winds have changed. Now Harris has decided that's not the political thing to say today; five years ago that's how he got elected, but he's changed his mind.

My first point is on health care: I think the public is sick of this debate. They simply say to Mike Harris, "If you think we should spend more money on health care, Premier Harris, if you believe that's what we should do, why would you not do that and instead of an \$8-billion tax cut, do something a little bit less?" If that's what he believes, that's what he should be doing.

For the public this debate about where the money comes from—there is only one taxpayer, I remind all of us. There's no magical money in Ottawa. It is the same money that comes out of the same pockets of the same people as here in Ontario. If we believe here in Ontario we should be spending more money on health care, then let's do it.

We've got \$4 billion for corporate tax cuts, which will make Ontario's corporations 25% lower in tax rates than our neighbouring jurisdictions in the US. There's \$1.2 billion on capital gains in here, and there's \$3 billion more on tax cuts and personal income tax cuts. If we believe we should be spending more money, let's do that. The billion dollars—if Premier Harris believes that Ontario should be spending more money on health care, then surely, rather than this US-inspired Jesse Ventura cash refund, wouldn't we be better to invest it in our health care system?

I go back again to, "Tax cuts create jobs." You find me one economist who doesn't say the major driving

force in the Ontario economy has been our exports. I say that our priorities are wrong: \$8 billion in tax cuts when we're now spending \$300 million less on post-secondary education; the province is spending less money on elementary and secondary schools. I gather Premier Harris is saying we're not spending enough on health care. I also wanted to say that again part of this Doing Business talks a lot about the environment here in Ontario, the clean air, the clean water. What has happened in the budget? We have cut the environmental budget once again. That's the area where, again, you want to look at building a strong long-term foundation. Surely we should be investing in the brains of this province. Surely we should be investing in the health of all our citizens. Surely we should be investing in our environment.

I wanted to talk a little bit about another area where this will not allow the investments, and that's in our infrastructure. The government talks often about this SuperBuild fund and how we need to invest about \$4 billion a year in infrastructure, half of that from the private sector and half of it from the public sector.

The example the government always uses of good private sector investment is the 407. I say to the people of Ontario, particularly the users of the 407, that was a bad deal. You were ripped off. You will pay for 99 years for a pre-election cash grab.

Let's go through a few of the details of the 407 deal. It closed on May 5, 1999. That was the day the election was called. The cheque came in the door; the election was called. The 407 sold for \$3.1 billion. It cost \$1.5 billion to build and sold for \$3.1 billion. The public may say: "That's terrific. We got \$1.6 billion more than it cost to build it." But here's the catch: The \$1.6 billion went into the pre-election slush fund, but who's going to pay for that? The poor users of the 407.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Forever.

Mr Phillips: Forever. Here are some of the details of the 407 deal. By the way, we are desperately trying to get at the real details, but the government refuses to release them. Here's what we do know. I can remember in the legislation they said, "We'll only sell it for 30 years, and then we'll get it back." It's 99 years. I remember the announcement the day the deal closed. They said, "We are going to limit toll increases, over 15 years in total, to approximately three cents a kilometre." In other words, 15 years from now the tolls could only go up a total of three cents a kilometre. In nine months, for a majority of the hours, it has gone up 4.5 cents a kilometre. By the way, if you don't pay your tolls, you don't get your licence renewed. Furthermore, the government refuses to let the public see the deal.

2000

The reason I'm spending the time on this is because the government will say, "That's our flagship." But here's part of the serious concern we have: We obtained a public document, which is the document the 407 owner was using to raise money, \$325 million. Part of that document said, "If you want to invest in this, you really should come and look at the tolling agreement," that in

order to understand why this thing is a good investment and why you can make money on it and why you should put your dollars into this thing, come and look at this tolling agreement, because that will tell you how we're going to get our revenue. That's an agreement the government has refused to give to the public. So I phoned the owner up and said, "I'm coming up to look at it," because they said, "You can come up and see this agreement." The owner knew who I was. He said, "Well, you have to invest \$100,000 in it." I said: "Well, you never know. I'll come up and take a look at it." "But you have to have a broker." "I have a broker." "OK, but now if you look at it you have to sign a confidentiality agreement that you'll never disclose to anyone at any time what you saw."

What I'm saying is that if you're going to make money on the 407, if you want to invest in it, if you want to be part of the bonanza that's going to come by owning the 407, you can see these secret deals, you can look at them, because you're going to invest your money. But if you're a user of the 407, if you drive on the 407, if it's you who are going to be paying thousands and thousands of dollars in tolls, you can't see it. I find that obscene, that the public—by the way, in this deal for \$3.1 billion, it sold for \$500 million more than Air Canada and CN Rail, our national rail line and our national airline, combined sold for. This thing was the biggest cash grab certainly in the history of Ontario, if not North America, and it was because the government said: "We're going to sell you a road for 99 years. This thing is going to be jammed, because we all know that the area north of the 401 is going to grow and grow, and you can take the tolls without limit, and furthermore, if they don't pay, we'll be the real collection agency because they don't get their licence renewed."

Just today we got from the government part of the deal. But of course the key parts—do you see these? These are all blank pages. Right when you think it's going to get good, it goes blank.

Hon Mr Klees: How much did you pay for those invisible pages?

Mr Phillips: The member says, how much did we pay? You're absolutely right. In order to get the blank pages, we had to write a cheque. So they photocopied a blank page—not unlike, by the way, the debate we heard earlier today on what's called POSO, the provincial savings office.

The reason I'm spending the time on this is because the public hear that there's going to be the SuperBuild fund private-public sector partnership. Whenever we ask about a good example of private-public sector partnerships, we're told that the 407 is our good example. When you look at it, the poor users of the 407 have tolls up more than 50% in eight months for much of the day. It used to be that there was a non-rush-hour toll. Now everything's a rush hour. They simply said, "Everything's a rush hour." We know one individual whose licence couldn't be renewed because he owed them a penny. That deal was fundamentally flawed, and if the govern-

ment thinks that was a good example of a public-private sector partnership, we have a serious problem.

I also wanted to chat briefly about gambling. This has become an enormously successful cash cow for the government. They've just introduced 10,000 slot machines. If anybody has one in their community—the member for London will know—they are are throwing off cash like you've never seen. What the government did was quietly publish a regulation one Saturday that said, "We're going to expand these slot machine facilities to include gambling tables." They didn't announce it like you would have thought they would.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): A press conference?

Mr Phillips: A press conference? No. It went through in what's called a regulation, published in the Ontario Gazette, that one has to go through, dare I say, with a fine-toothed comb to find it. There is no question that we in Ontario are now hooked on gambling. The government says it's going to be \$2 billion in revenue. It's going to be well more than that.

At one time, it was a terrific economic tool for some of our border cities—for Niagara Falls, 80% to 85%, and for Windsor, 80% to 90% of the revenue was from the US. This was new money coming into Ontario. It was very helpful to the economies to both those communities, no doubt about it, and that is of no concern.

But if one believes that having disposable income is important, those 10,000 slot machines alone extract about \$1 billion from the players. The racing industry has been happy with it—I understand that. But we are now moving to another 18 full-scale casinos at the racetracks. Incidentally, I think one eventually reaches a saturation point.

So I go back to the statement of priorities by the government in their budget. I know the tax cuts created a \$24-billion increase in the debt. The debt went from \$90 billion when Mr Harris became Premier to \$114 billion now. I know that what has been driving the Ontario economy has been exports, which have comparatively little to do with tax cuts and a lot to do with the quality of our auto sector and our manufacturing sector, our ability to compete in the US and, dare I say, a low Canadian dollar as well. But that's the priority of the government.

We would have thought that at this time there might have been an opportunity to make some investments in the future of Ontario—our colleges and universities. This "Doing Business" document is full of compliments about the quality of our workforce and our education system, the very things we've chose to undermine in this budget.

Our elementary and secondary schools: When you take away what the government said it would put back in property tax cuts, it actually looks, and is, down.

The health care system: Premier Harris is saying we should be spending more money but decided not to.

Infrastructure: The only proud example they have about successful private sector partnerships is Highway 407, where the users are not only paying for the cost to build it—\$1.5 billion—but is paying a \$1.6 billion cost which had nothing to do with the highway. It was just a

cash grab, closed literally minutes before Premier Harris called the election on May 5, 1999.

The budget cutting to the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources—two ministries that invest in the long-term health of our environment. Our agricultural community, our rural community—choosing to close the agricultural offices. It's a budget that bows down to the tax cut and ignores the areas in which we should be investing.

2010

I understand the small business tax will be cut to 4%. That will be very helpful for the doctors. Doctors are now allowed to incorporate. The OHIP fees were structured on the basis of a certain cost structure for governments, but now we're moving to allow self-regulated groups to incorporate. So I can see why, in order to get an agreement with the doctors, they had to provide some way of increasing their after-tax earnings. Good for the doctors. This is a big win for them, particularly with this budget. There are two things: It takes the threshold for small businesses from \$200,000 up to \$400,000. That's great for the traditional small business; it hasn't been changed in some time and one does need to look at adjusting these things. But for the doctors who are going to incorporate, this is a terrific opportunity to substantially increase their take-home pay.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): You support it.

Mr Phillips: The member said we support it.

It was instructive: When we asked the staff to give us a calculation on what this means, they wouldn't. They ran for cover on it. This is a terrific gift to those who choose to incorporate.

On the budget bill, Bill 72, let me restate that it is an \$8-billion tax cut, which is enormous. Recognize where the majority of it is: in corporate taxes. With these cuts we will move to tax rates—instead of roughly 40% federal and provincial in our neighbouring jurisdictions—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me. I can't hear the member. It would probably make sense if you listened to the member, so that he could finish his speech.

Mr Phillips: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Here's the priority of the Harris government: An \$8-billion tax cut that, without any question of a doubt, benefits those who are best off in our society—\$1.2 billion for those who are going to realize capital gains. It cuts the capital gains tax from 75% to 50%—terrific. It's a huge benefit to the Bay Street crowd. But for those of more modest means, no. On the corporate taxes, we're not only going to match the neighbouring jurisdictions, we're going to go 10 percentage points below them. As a matter of fact, Harris says, "I'd like to get to half the US rates." Well, I understand the corporations like that. But if we are to sustain our health care system and sustain the way we have managed to ensure that young people have a chance at post-secondary education, we have to make our minds up. It is not possible to sustain that and have

dramatically lower taxes than our neighbouring jurisdictions.

The \$1-billion refund: As I said, it's Jesse Ventura, it's bringing in the US type of propaganda. If Premier Harris was serious when he spent your money, \$5 million, saying: "We need more money for health care. We have to get more money for health care. We think health care is a priority"—at the very time he was running those ads, he had the \$1 billion sitting in the bank and he knew it. He said: "No, I'm going to play this game of blaming someone else. I've got the money, but I'm not going to tell anybody I've got the money until after my little ad campaign."

This is about priorities and the future of Ontario and how we want it. I understand, as the government continually reminds us, that you won the election and you have the right to do it. But we do not have the obligation to agree with that \$8 billion dollars of tax cuts, plus \$1 billion of cash in the form of a Mike Harris advertisement, at a time when we're spending and investing \$300 million less in post-secondary education, at a time when we're spending less money in elementary and secondary education, at a time when we have huge, growing problems with our environment. Most of us are faced with low water levels in the lake, smog alerts at the earliest we've had them that I can ever recall, but now the government's decided this is the time to cut the environmental budget, this is the time to cut the natural resources budget, this is the time they said, as my colleague Mr Cleary constantly reminds our caucus, they can cut out the agricultural offices because we have to find the money for these tax cuts. Well, it is about priorities, and in our judgment the priorities of this government are wrong.

The Acting Speaker: Comments or questions?

Mr Bisson: I just want to comment on a couple of points that the finance critic for the official opposition had on the budget speech. He's right on the one point, that the government has different priorities. I think it's a question of the choices they make. They had a decision to make. They could have taken the surplus in this year's budget and applied it to health care, something they have been promoting fairly effectively over the last three or four months. They have been after the federal government to transfer more dollars from the federal budget, from their surplus, into health care programs. I would have to believe that the government, in their ads, were sincere when they were saying they wanted more money in health care. What they've done instead is play a political game, trying to blame the feds for the problem they've got with the health care cuts they've made over the past couple of years, and when they had an opportunity themselves to put dollars in their own provincial budget, they chose not to do that. They basically put one cent into health care for every 99 cents that they gave by way of a tax cut.

I think it's not only a question of priority, it's a question of choices. I know that even in Conservative ridings there are many individuals who are really worried about

what is happening in the health care system. The line-ups for services are getting longer, services are starting to deteriorate because of the cuts that have been made in health care, and they wonder, justifiably so, why it is that a government which on the one hand has been spending millions of taxpayers' dollars making the argument to spend more dollars in health care on the part of the federal government, chastising it because it didn't do it in its last budget—they themselves, when they deliver a budget with a surplus, decide to put one cent out of every dollar back into health care and 99 cents went into a tax cut. You've got to really wonder about the sincerity of the government.

I think it comes down to choices. This government chose on the side of tax cuts rather than trying to provide services to the people of Ontario. I think that choice is going to haunt us in the long term.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I appreciate having a few moments to reflect upon the comments made by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. During his comments this evening, he asked us to reflect upon the halcyon days, those wonderful days. He told us not to forget where we came from. I think he's right. I think we should remember just how far we have come. We should think back to the days in 1988, 1989 and 1990, when we in this province had the privilege of having the Liberals in office and hearing about their budgets.

Remember the headline in the *Globe and Mail* on April 21, 1988: "Ontarians Face \$1.3 Billion Tax Increase." It goes on to say: "Continuing the Liberal habit of raising taxes rather than restraining spending, he has hit every aspect of the Ontario economy for increased revenue in his fourth budget."

"Asked whether the election victory, which frees the Liberals from facing the voters for another three or four years, also freed him to raise taxes, Mr Nixon told a news conference,"—of course, he was the Treasurer at the time—"I'd be less than honest if I say that it's not a consideration."

What were the comments that emanated from the media after the next budget? Here's one: "In all, it's a \$1.3-billion heist of extra taxes from Ontarians, with a special, nastier rip at the people who dare to continue trying to live in Metro."

On their last budget before they were booted out of office, here's a quote: "And in his last two budgets alone, Nixon hiked taxes by \$2.6 billion. In fact, this new cigarette tax was Nixon's 33rd straight tax hike in his six budgets" That was scandalous. We know that. They know that, in all honesty. The people of Ontario knew that, and that's why they're on that side of the floor and we're over here.

2020

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): First of all, I'd like to congratulate the member for Scarborough-Agincourt for his fine, thoughtful speech where he talked about the fact that the debt has increased since 1995 by \$24 billion, and also all the money that was spent on government advertising, and

over \$3 million to send the cheques out, as per this year's budget, when we know right and well that all isn't well in health care.

Back in 1995, when the Premier of the day was asked to comment on health care and hospital restructuring on Global television, he was asked by Robert Fisher, "What are your plans on hospitals?" "You know, Robert, it's not plan to close hospitals." Since then, he has closed 25. In my riding this past weekend, I've had people waiting to get transferred for triple bypasses; I've had people waiting to get transferred for cancer care. That's pretty devastating to the family.

The other thing that has devastated rural Ontario is the closing of the rural agricultural offices. I remember in the last two elections, it was not their plan to take any money out of agriculture. Well, it's happened. The rural offices have been closed and that's torn the heart right out of many communities, because they were used 16 hours a day, six days a week.

We all know that what is driving the economy is the booming American economy, the exchange rate and low interest rates. If it wasn't for that, which is not within the control of the province of Ontario, we would be living in a different province. So we can't take all the credit for it. But at least we've got to pay our bills and stress health care and education.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to congratulate my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt for his remarks. They're certainly well presented.

I guess we have a fundamental disagreement with the member opposite. When he was in government, they thought that the government wasn't big enough, that they had to tax more, and they raised taxes 33 times. Then in 1990, they took another flip-flop, another U-turn and they voted against every single tax increase the NDP government of the day brought in. So I was excited when we were elected in 1995. I thought, "He was just as much against the NDP tax increases as we were, and he'll want to help us get rid of the NDP tax increases—money he said the government didn't need—by voting against them." But every day he would come into this House and he would vote against and speak against tax decreases, and the member opposite said that we had to wait until the budget was balanced for tax decreases.

I was so excited. I came here to hear his speech on the thing. I said: "We've finally balanced the budget. It's even the second year of a balanced budget. Gerry Phillips will finally be able to come on board and support our tax decreases."

But then he said no, the tax decreases, the income tax cuts particularly, had to be progressive. I looked in and I thought: "Wow, if you make \$30,000, you get the same income tax cuts under the dividend as if you make \$1 million. So if you make \$30,000 or \$1 million, you get the same amount. Gerry Phillips will want to support us." Then we find out, "No, you have to spend more on health care." I thought, "Wow, if we could just spend as much

as the Liberals promised to spend on health care, maybe that would be enough." But it's not enough. We found we're spending almost \$6 billion more in provincial money on health care than the previous government did, more money that the party opposite promised to spend in the last election, and it's still not enough.

What we discovered from the Liberal Party is that tax cuts later are tax cuts never.

The Acting Speaker: Two-minute response.

Mr Phillips: Just to respond to a few of the comments, my concern with the Harris tax cuts has been, first, that we've had to borrow the money—the only one in North America that's decided to do it this way. I used to be in business in the good old days, though I like this job, and there was never a bank that would ever allow you to declare a dividend if you were running at a loss. They'd say, "Listen, get your fiscal house in order." That's what, dare I say, Ralph Klein did, that's what Bouchard did, that's what every other province did. Harris has added \$24 billion of debt to the province; he had to borrow the money. That was always our concern with the way you handled it. You should have done it, in our judgment, the way every US state did it, the way every other jurisdiction in Canada did it.

Our problem now is that you've chosen \$8 billion of tax cuts. You've said: "We are going to commit to \$8 billion of tax cuts. It's going to be \$4 billion for the corporate sector, and \$1.2 billion—if you can cash in your shares, we're going to cut your tax rate from 75% to 50%, and we're going to reduce personal income taxes and, by the way, get rid of the surtaxes on the upper-income."

You've got \$8 billion there, but you don't have any money for post-secondary education, you don't have any money to invest in our colleges and universities and you've chosen not to invest in our elementary and secondary schools. It was Premier Harris who said, "Federal government, give me more money because I'm not spending enough money on health care," and he had a billion dollars hidden away in the bank.

So it's about priorities. We know your priority and we realize you got elected on that basis, but I think Ontario knows that we need to invest in our infrastructure, our human infrastructure.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dunlop: I'm very pleased to be taking part this evening in this historic and important debate on Bill 72, An Act to pay a dividend to Ontario taxpayers, cut taxes, create jobs and implement the budget.

This piece of legislation is one more important step in securing a strong future for the province of Ontario. It builds on job creation and it builds on strong economic growth. The announcement of the 2000 provincial budget in this House was a very historic day for the people of this province, as our government balanced the books, not only this year but last year as well. As the finance minister noted, the last time the Ontario budget was balanced in two consecutive fiscal years in a row was 1942-43 and 1943-44, almost 60 years ago.

I would like to commend Finance Minister Eves, who upon coming to office in 1995 had to face a projected deficit of \$11.3 billion after 10 years of taxing and spending by consecutive Liberal and NDP governments. During the previous reign, the NDP government was spending almost \$1 million every hour more than it was taking in. It was five years ago when this government committed to the people of this province that we would balance the books, and we have fulfilled that promise earlier than expected.

The Common Sense Revolution that Premier Harris outlined in 1994 has been a resounding success because he kept the promises he made. I hear all this talk tonight about adding to the debt. When you start with \$11 billion and you lay out a plan to the people of this province—it was laid out clearly that there would be accumulated debts until the budget was paid down.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Let the member make his speech.

Mr Dunlop: But keeping promises is nothing new for this government. That is one of the main reasons I personally ran as a candidate for the Mike Harris team in the last election. I remember, during that campaign, when Premier Harris came to my riding, the first time I'd ever actually got a chance to meet him, and visited Napoleon Wolf Steel, makers of quality woodstoves, gas barbecues, gas stoves and fireplaces. I remember this because just last week I was on hand for the unveiling of a multi-million-dollar expansion of this company. Clearly the economy is doing very well, thanks in large part to the policies of this government, the main policy being that tax cuts create jobs.

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I am happy to inform this House of many more important projects in my community, particularly a multi-million-dollar expansion of Weber Tool and Mold. I'll be attending the grand opening on Friday in Midland, Ontario. This company will hire more staff and inject additional money into the Simcoe North economy. It is a \$15-million expansion and will exhibit the only technology of its kind in the world.

On the same day, I have a number of other events to attend as well. For example, the Minister of Tourism will be coming to my riding and in the afternoon on Friday we will be celebrating the opening of the expansion of a new conference centre at the inn at Christie's Mill at Port Severn, Ontario. The economy has been doing well, the tourism industry has been doing well, and this company, which is on a new sewer and water system in the village of Port Severn, planned this expansion. They're already open and the business is thriving.

As well, I will be attending on Saturday the expansion of the Tom Smith Chev-Olds dealership in Midland, Ontario. They've doubled the size of the showroom and opened a complete new service department. As we all know, the construction industry is doing very well, but so is the automotive industry.

As well, we have some other exciting news in our riding. I was so pleased when Minister Cunningham announced, through Minister Wilson, that Georgian College in Barrie, which has campuses throughout Simcoe county, will be receiving \$18 million in SuperBuild funding towards expansion of the college, which in a partnership through York University will allow students in our communities to receive university degrees.

As well, as you all know, and it's been very controversial here, I also have the superjail in Penetanguishene being constructed in my riding. There's approximately 300 new permanent jobs at the site, but so far this \$85-million project has left about \$24 million in the community of Penetanguishene in construction costs and labour and in accommodation and food.

Probably one of the worst-kept secrets was the fact that there were going to be tax cuts in this budget. We've got accustomed to Finance Minister Eves giving us tax cuts, and we expected them again in this budget. After all, in 1996 this government made 10 tax cuts, as promised; in 1997, 20 tax cuts; in the 1997-98 inter-budget, eight more tax cuts were announced; in 1998, 29 more tax cuts were announced; in the 1998-99 inter-budget, two more tax cuts were announced; last year 30 tax cuts were announced; and in this year's budget, we're proposing 67 more tax cuts. When implemented, this government will have cut taxes 166 times since being elected in 1995. And yes, the members opposite have opposed all 166 tax cuts.

This has been translated into more jobs and more opportunity for the people of this province. For example, in April this year we created 2,300 net new jobs in this province. Unemployment fell to 5.5%. The youth jobless rate has now fallen to 11.4%. Nationally, employment rose by 4,800 jobs. So Ontario has contributed about 50% of the jobs created in Canada, with about 33% of the population.

As we have cut taxes 99 times from 1995 to 1999, over 701,000 net new jobs have been created. Most of these jobs have been in the private sector. In 1999 alone we had 198,000 new jobs created in this province. This is clear evidence that tax cuts create jobs. The debate is over. Now perhaps our federal government will seriously follow our example.

Included in this year's tax reductions is a \$200 rebate cheque to be issued to those I would like to call the investors in Ontario's economy, the people of this great province. Before this government was elected, taxpayers were forced to put more money in but received nothing in return. Liberal and NDP governments told taxpayers to give and give—tax and spend, tax and spend. What did they get in return? More tax hikes. Thanks to the Mike Harris government, they are finally getting some of their hard-earned money back in the form of a cheque. I hope the Leader of the Opposition's friends in Ottawa copy our lead and give the people of this province more of their hard-earned money back in tax cuts, health care spending and tax dividends, and I hope they quit clouding the issue with these tax points.

As a member of the Premier's task force on rural Ontario, I had the distinct pleasure of touring this province and hearing the concerns of rural Ontarians, especially about the many barriers that are preventing businesses in rural Ontario from creating more jobs. Rural residents don't want to lose their brightest children to the big cities. Our youth deserve equal opportunities no matter what communities they live in.

The task force recommended a number of initiatives that will help remove barriers to economic growth. I would like to personally thank the minister for responding to our report and I'd like to thank Dr Galt, as chairman of that committee, for his leadership and for introducing a number of initiatives such as the following: There is the establishment of a \$600-million Ontario small-town rural development initiative, of which \$200 million will be set aside for economic development and \$400 million for infrastructure through SuperBuild. We're converting the retail sales tax rebate program for farm building materials to a point-of-sale exemption. We're cutting Ontario's mining tax rate in half, from 20% to 10%, over five years, which will help northern communities.

When we visited St Mary's, we heard the Stratford Festival people make a presentation about the importance of the Stratford Festival to that part of Ontario. I was extremely pleased to see \$2 million being put in for the redevelopment of the Avon Theatre in Stratford. I believe \$300 million a year is generated from the use of the Stratford Theatre.

We have listened to rural residents and we remain committed to spreading the benefits of a strong economy to all regions of this province. More of Ontario should enjoy the economic boom that the GTA and Golden Horseshoe are enjoying.

While on the task force and since being elected as the representative of Simcoe North, the number one issue of concern that I have heard has been in the area of health care. The budget reconfirms our government's commitment for a strong health care system for the people of this province. Last year alone, we invested an additional \$1.4 billion in health care. Since coming to office we have increased health care spending to \$20.7 billion in 1999 and we have committed to increase that funding to \$22 billion for this coming fiscal year.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member is giving a very interesting speech and I would have thought it appropriate to have enough members in the House for quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum?

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is it appropriate that a member would call for a quorum call while he's in the House and walk out?

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. The member for Simcoe North.

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Mr Dunlop: It was only a year ago that the government promised to invest \$22.7 billion in health care by the year 2003-04, that being in our Blueprint. That goal will be reached next year, a full two years ahead of schedule.

In the health care portion of our budget we had a lot of interesting announcements as well. The one that comes to my mind is that \$1 billion will be invested in hospitals to accelerate capital restructuring. That's very interesting in my community because we have about a \$36-million project at the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital that we're very interested in seeing proceed. Fundraising is currently underway for that. Royal Victoria Hospital in Joe Tascona's riding south of me in Barrie is proposing a cancer care facility. I'm very fortunate that I have two nursing homes under construction currently. St Andrew's Centennial Manor in Midland is putting a 100-bed unit in and Leacock Point just started construction last week in Orillia of a 70-bed unit.

We recognize that many hospitals are facing transition issues and for them we have included \$235 million in this year's budget. Glen Penwarden, the CEO of the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital in my riding, is quoted as saying, "It's a tremendous budget increase, one the system needs."

We recognize the importance that medical research and development plays in providing the best care for all Ontarians. To that end there is a \$500-million endowment to the Ontario Innovation Trust, including investment in cancer research facilities.

As Dr Calvin Stiller, chairman of the Canadian Medical Discoveries Fund, said, "The creation of the Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund and the Ontario Innovation Trust has launched a new era of exploration and excitement in both the public and private research communities right here in Ontario."

For priority programs such as cancer, cardiac and end-stage kidney disease there will be an additional \$54 million, along with \$45 million to expand toll-free telephone health services.

In underserved areas such as mine there is a provision for a total of \$4 million each year for free tuition for medical students moving to rural and underserved areas. I have to admit we have a problem now and in the future with a shortage of doctors and I'm very pleased to see that happening.

Dr Ronald Wexler, president of the Ontario Medical Association, said, "Today's provincial budget is a significant reinvestment in health care for Ontario and is a vital step in the process of beginning to fix our health care system." Wexler said the government "has laid solid groundwork for long-term solutions to the challenges facing our health care system."

I understand that the amount of money that a government spends is not the only measure of good health care. Sustaining the quality of health care that Ontarians de-

serve requires restructuring and reforming our health care system to keep up with the new technology and meet the challenges.

One of the most important areas of reform is in primary care. That is why our government introduced primary care networks in 1998.

Health service is of a higher quality because there is better communication about the patient's health. The family doctor, nurse or other health care professional the patient deals with will keep his own family doctor informed about the health care problems that are around. That's why we need the primary care system.

If a patient speaks to the nurse staffing the after-hours phone service, his own family doctor will know about it the next day and may follow up to see how that patient is doing. There is improved sharing of information about the patient's medical history or medications through computers, and this leads to better advice and treatment.

To support this initiative the budget has set aside \$150 million for new information systems, which will be the backbone of the primary care units. Another \$100 million will be set aside to expand these pilot projects to other communities and eventually across our system so that everyone has access to a doctor 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

While health care was the number one priority, the second issue that I heard about was education. This being Education Week, I would like to talk about how the budget provides more funding for our education system and how this government has acted in the best interests of improving the quality of education in our province.

Earlier today I heard the member for High Park-Parkdale go on and on about how we cut funding on education. Here are the facts: In 1994-95 and 1995-96, the total funding going to school boards was \$12.9 billion. In the upcoming 2000-01 school year, the funding available to school boards will be more than \$13.4 billion. Furthermore, province-wide funding to the classroom in 2000-01 is expected to be \$700 million higher than it was in 1997, the year that improvements to the funding system were announced. Where are the cuts? All I see are increases in spending.

As well, in the 2000 budget the government announced more money to help our educational system. We've committed about \$270 million in additional funding to education in a wide variety of areas, including:

- \$100 million to reduce average class size in JK to grade 3 down to a maximum board average of 24 students from the previous average of 25. I understand this will require 1,000 additional teachers;

- \$70 million for school-based programs to assist children in JK to grade 3 to build their reading skills and other skills important in early learning;

- \$70 million to help the early identification of learning problems and other exceptionalities, focusing on JK to grade 3. John Laughlin, director of the Thames Valley District School Board in London, said of this commitment, "That is something we applaud";

- \$23 million in one-time funding to recognize the increased costs of transporting students to and from school. We heard a lot about this on the Premier's task force from the school bus operators, and I'm glad to see that this has been implemented to try to help them out a little bit because of the rising cost of fuel.

There is \$140 million this year for special education. This funding will allow for early intervention and will expand programs for students with speech and language disorders and learning disabilities. It will also be invested to increase the number of specialist teachers and professional supports. As Dr Bette Stephenson, chair of the Learning Opportunities Task Force, has said, "Ontarians can be proud of their government's initiatives to open doors for learning disabled children." The increasingly successful experience at the post-secondary level is just one indication of their value.

We've allocated \$5 million to support training teachers to identify signs of abuse or neglect, as requested by June Callwood, author and highly respected advocate for social justice.

I know my time is running out. I didn't quite get through it but I want to thank you for this opportunity this evening of speaking to this very important bill.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Duncan: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to my colleague from Simcoe North, who always presents a very reasonable position but one that I feel compelled to respond to.

I noted that he was talking at some length about what he believes to be the achievements. He neglected to mention that this government has added \$24 billion to the provincial debt, second only to the Bob Rae government in the history of the province. I noted that he neglected to remind the people of Ontario that this is the second-last government in this country to balance its budget, behind, once again, the New Democrats in British Columbia. This government's priorities have not been properly followed. Number one, before there were tax cuts there should have been a balanced budget. No one disputes that when there's a period of surplus, consideration must be given. The question is priorities.

I listened very attentively to the member for Simcoe North when he spoke about primary care reform. What he forgot to tell you is that this government's deal with the OMA effectively killed primary care reform in Ontario.

I just keep coming back to the fact that this government added more debt to the taxpayers of this province than any government save and except the Bob Rae government of 1990 to 1995. They taxed and spent almost the way Mulroney did, and I know a number of them supported Mulroney. I know the Minister of Community and Social Services was a loyal servant of the Mulroney government as they increased taxes and increased the deficit.

Finally, the member spoke of education. No government in the history of this country has a worse record on

education than the Harris government. You all ought to be ashamed of yourselves.

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Mr Bisson: I'm going to stop the temptation to talk about the last time there was supposedly a balanced budget in this province under the David Peterson government, who were defeated, and then when we opened the books when we got back into the Legislature it turned out that there was a deficit of almost \$4 billion at that point. So talk about people blowing out both sides of their mouth on that one.

When it comes to the question of the debt, the thing I find interesting is, when I sat in the Legislature from 1990 to 1995, I listened to Mike Harris and a number of members who are now in the government talk about the importance—and they're doing it again—of getting the debt under control. Even though we were going through the worst recession since the 1930s, the Conservatives talked about how debt was such a bad thing. Obviously some people bought the message, because in 1995 they voted these people in. But what did they do? They borrowed money in order to give a tax cut to try to fulfil some ideological dream they have. But the result has been to increase the debt.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): Oh, come on.

Mr Bisson: Oh, come on. What did you do? Every tax cut that you gave meant you had to borrow the money or you had to take away from future surpluses to pay for it. What they managed to do was to increase the debt in the province by over \$30 billion over the last four to five years.

These guys across the way are trying to have it both ways. If you truly believed the debt is an important thing, you wouldn't have started off by giving a tax decrease while you were trying to balance your budget, and now that you have the surplus, you would not be using the surplus to give a tax cut. Rather, you would be trying to bring your debt down, something that you're not doing.

Mr Galt: I'm very pleased to respond to the member for Simcoe North, just an exceptional presentation.

I really want to zero in on his efforts as a member of the Premier's Task Force on Rural Economic Renewal that I was fortunate enough to chair. I can tell you the commitment of this member: He was literally at every meeting. There was one meeting he had to miss and that was because he was back in his riding for a commitment. Otherwise, he was there 100% of the time. He was there when we started and he was there till the end of the meeting. And the family is committed. When we stopped in Orillia his wife was there to wish him well. She gave him a kiss. I thought it was one of the lobbyists who was there, but it turned out it was his wife. That's the kind of commitment that's in that family. I can tell you that I was very impressed.

Mr Clark: A real Conservative family.

Mr Galt: A real Conservative family.

The member for Simcoe North was telling us about the priorities that we heard while we were on the road.

There were several priorities, but look at the response of the Minister of Finance when he heard that there was a need out there. How much was in the budget? Six hundred million dollars for small-town and rural development. That's the kind of dollars that were set aside.

We also heard on the road the problems that the school bus operators were having. What happened in the budget? Twenty-three thousand dollars for next year for the school bus operators here in the province.

The shortage of physicians: What's in the budget? Four million dollars for physicians to pay for their tuition if, when they graduate, they will go back to rural Ontario and those areas that are in desperate need of physicians. What did they do back in 1993? They cut 25% of the training spaces in our universities for physicians and specialists. That's why we're in trouble today with primary care, because of the cuts that were made to the training of physicians.

Mr Bradley: First of all, I want to compliment the Minister of Municipal Affairs. He now has on his desk a copy of *Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government*. I am pleased he has that. It is certainly worth reading, and I hope he takes it to heart, as I know he will. He's a person who wants to get this kind of information. As long as you stay out of Niagara, we'll be fine. Cold Blue is a little different. I had to be careful with that one.

Member for Simcoe North, I think I heard you say, "Don't give me the malarkey" about tax points or something. It's interesting in the House when you listen to an answer by the Minister of Transportation. The Leader of the Opposition asked him a question about the expenditures for public transportation. Do you know what his answer was? He said: "We gave the municipalities some tax room. We vacated this tax room and allowed them to have the tax room." That sounds familiar. I just want to say that you are using exactly the same arguments.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: That's not the same thing.

Mr Bradley: The member for London North Centre says, "That's not the same thing." Tax room is tax room. I have to tell him that.

What happened was, Mike Harris really wanted the money from the feds to fund his tax cuts. If the feds give him one more penny, it won't go to health care, it'll go to fund the tax cuts. You didn't follow my recommendation. I said you should forget about the tax cuts and then blame the feds and say, "You know, we wanted to give tax cuts, but those awful feds wouldn't let us." But the true priority was giving tax cuts to the corporate sector and to the richest people in the province.

Lastly, I notice you didn't mention the huge cut in the Ministry of the Environment. The Ministry of the Environment has been cut now by 40%, with 33% of the staff out the door. I thought the member would mention that for sure. And I'm glad to see the Minister of Municipal Affairs with *Merger Mania* in his pocket.

The Acting Speaker: Response, the member from Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: I appreciate all the comments made by all the members here tonight.

I have to repeat some facts. When Mike Harris came to power in 1995, he inherited a deficit of \$11.3 billion. We were spending \$1 million an hour more than we were taking in. He promised tax cuts to stimulate the economy.

The results by the year 2000—I think we have to look at what actually happened. Ontario's economic growth in 1999 was 5.7%. The Ontario economy grew faster than the economy of the rest of Canada. The Ontario economy grew faster than the economy of the people south of the border, the United States. The Ontario economy grew faster than all the industrialized countries of the G7.

Our exports are up. Our construction industry increased 24% in 1999. Our auto sector is up 16%. We have created 701,000 net new jobs. Almost 400,000 fewer people are on the welfare rolls than there were in 1995.

Interjection: Close to 500,000.

Mr Dunlop: I'm sorry, close to 500,000. It's very clear: tax cuts create jobs. The debate's over.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): It's with a sense of regret that I stand before you tonight and get to speak to this budget. I do not want to come to the dark side. I will stay on the side that puts people first in this province and not a government that does things that hurt people. Do you know what? This is a budget that does not contain a vision. It does not look at the future. It's only looking at the short term. You're not looking at the long term, and that's a serious mistake. This is a budget that fails the future of this province. It's a budget that fails to use today's wealth to secure tomorrow's prosperity.

This is a government that is ninth out of 11 provinces to balance its budget. This is a government that has implemented unprecedented user fees across this province—the honourable member for St Catharines said 892 and still growing and counting. This is a government that has had the least amount of respect that I have ever seen for municipal governments. I had the opportunity to be a municipal politician under a Liberal government, a New Democrat government and a Conservative government, and this government has the least amount of respect for municipal politicians. The unprecedented downloading that has taken place in this province is a really serious problem.

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This budget fails to address the concerns and needs of this province in so many ways. There is no mention in this budget of dealing with the serious situation of homelessness that exists in this province. There are no initiatives in this budget to address those serious problems, and no initiative to see any new emphasis directed towards the much-needed areas of public housing and supportive housing. The goal has always been that the private sector is going to do it. Well, the private sector hasn't done it.

Interjection.

Mr Peters: If you look back to 1995, how many public housing units have been built in your riding of Lon-

don-Fanshawe? Zero public housing units. That's a serious disgrace.

The other area they failed to address in this budget is the whole question of public transportation. Public transportation has been downloaded to municipalities, but municipalities are trying to cope with an unprecedented amount of other issues that have been downloaded on to them. Public transportation needs a serious investment and a commitment by this government, and there's no commitment in this budget.

Let's look at some of the things that are wrong in this budget. Let's start on page 5, "Tackling the debt." This government hasn't tackled the debt. We've seen the debt of this province rise dramatically—\$24 billion. But when you follow the numbers through in this budget, the emphasis on debt reduction is \$5 billion. What kind of investment is that in our future? What you're doing is mortgaging the future of the children of this province. The debt you are leaving on the backs of children is a disgrace, and you should be ashamed of yourself as a government for your lack of attention to dealing with this most important issue of the debt.

The \$200 rebate—not everybody is going to receive that \$200. By the way, I think it's a real misconception that everybody thinks they're going to get \$200 back. Why didn't you apply that \$200, or whatever the figure may be, to the debt? Pay off the debt of this province, get us on the right track and don't continue to increase the debt. If we see interest rates take any significant rise, we'll be in serious problems in this province and this government is going to be held accountable for that. You are mortgaging the future. They haven't even taken into account—I'd love to know what the actual costs are going to be to mail out all these cheques. They have not addressed that.

I think we need to talk about some other issues in the budget. There's the discussion of the \$300 million over five years for sports, culture, tourism and partnership initiatives. My constituency office received a number of calls. The best estimate the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation could give today was three to six months before we have a better idea of where those dollars are going to be used. This means that municipalities and cultural organizations whose budgets are already set for 2000 are not going to have a chance to tap into any of this money for the year 2000. That's a real shame.

On page 18 of the budget, they talk about renewed investment of \$1 billion dollars in Ontario highways. There's nothing in this budget for much-needed upgrades to highways like Highway 401. Within my riding I have 80 kilometres of the 401, including 50 kilometres that are part of this death trap that exists between Windsor and London. There's nothing, no commitment in this budget to anything toward Highway 401.

It's unfortunate that the Minister for Colleges and Universities has left the room. They talk about the SuperBuild investments that are going to be taking place. I want to know if that minister and the minister responsible for disabilities issues in this province—has this issue

been raised around the cabinet table to ensure that every single dollar to be spend on investment in new spaces is going to be barrier-free? I certainly hope so. The minister and the member for London-Fanshawe know. They saw first-hand in their own ridings where a brand new facility was built, but not to barrier-free status. They had to spend another \$70,000 to make it barrier-free. I think it's incumbent on the minister responsible for disabilities issues that she raise this issue at the cabinet table to ensure that for every dollar that's going to be spent by this government, not a single new barrier is going to be added. One only has to look at Cambrian College in Sudbury to see how you can create a barrier-free building at less than 1% additional cost—something that needs to be addressed.

We've heard a lot of talk on the question of rural Ontario. There are a few issues that I think need to be raised. When you look at their budget for building strong and safe communities, it's really interesting how this government loves to re-announce things. They talk about the \$35-million rural youth job strategy. That's an old announcement. They talk about the \$30-million rural job strategy fund, a three-year program. That program ended March 31. It's out of money. You talk about \$3 million to create jobs for rural students—the rural jobs program. You're going to create 4,500 jobs. I say right now to the Minister of Education, I can tell you how you can create 4,500 jobs in this province. Allow the school boards in the tobacco growing sections of this province—my riding of Elgin-Middlesex, Haldimand-Norfolk, Brant county—to make adjustments to their school year so that you can create 4,500 jobs without having to spend a cent.

Hon Mr Baird: Louder, louder.

Mr Peters: Sorry, that's just my tone of voice, Minister. I don't apologize for that.

You don't have to invest any money in jobs. Here we could create 4,500 jobs and bring \$16 million into the local economies, \$16 million for students who want to attend post-secondary education who have seen their tuition rates rise to unprecedented levels, thanks to your government and your lack of interest in the financial ability of students and their families to pay for post-secondary education.

There are 4,500 jobs right there. You don't have to invest any money. Does the Minister of Education do anything about that to accommodate those school boards? No. She lays down the law again. You've got a Toronto-centred approach that doesn't understand the real needs of rural Ontario.

I want to talk about the biggest farce in this budget, and that's the \$40 million they talk about for the Ontario whole farm relief program. I want the members to listen to what's contained in what I'm about to say, because I think there are some really serious issues here that need to be addressed. In my mind, the auditor's going to have to take a serious look at this program, and I believe the federal government's going to have to take a serious look at this program.

I want to start with a gentleman by the name of Stephen Thompson. Stephen Thompson is an accounting professional. He's got a master of business administration from the Ivey school of business at Western and is a former professor of farm management in accounting at the University of Guelph. I'm going to quote from his letter, dated May 9: "Many farmers were elated when Canada announced on February 25, 2000, that the AIDA inventory valuation rules were being changed. Producers could now determine opening and closing inventory values for each commodity using either a two-price system or the end-of-year pricing system, whichever resulted in a greater entitlement. This long overdue change by Canada would quite properly enable Canadian farmers to receive millions of extra dollars in completely justified farm aid benefits.

"But Ontario is not going to participate."

Mr Thompson wrote Mr Vanclief thanking him for this enhancement, but in his opinion it was a wasted letter. The Ontario whole farm relief "web site makes it quite clear that Ontario is not going to use the revised inventory valuation methods announced by the federal government, for either the federal or provincial programs of the 1999 OWFRP program Canada is willing to give Ontario farmers literally millions of dollars in extra benefits, but OMAFRA won't participate. Minister Hardeman continually cries wolf about Ontario not getting its 'fair share.' Yet it is Mr Hardeman who is single-handedly denying Ontario farmers the chance to received millions of additional dollars in federal aid."

Mr. Vanclief has promised Ontario farmers that we "will get this federal money even if he has to do it himself," and he may well have to.

If you looked at the OMAFRA web site on May 3, the day before the budget, there was a question and answer:

"Do I have a choice with how I value inventory? (eg the two methods used by AIDA)?"

"No. Inventory changes will be valued using the commodity prices provided on the fair market value list by OWFRP for both the federal and provincial portions of the payment. The revised inventory valuation methods announced by the federal government are not being implemented."

You know what? This means that literally millions of federal dollars offered to Ontario farmers are not going to be used by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food because OMAFRA refuses to allow access to them. Look back at the quotes that came out of the Ministry of Agriculture back in December. He wants to reiterate that his "government has consistently stated that the time has come for the federal government to give Ontario farmers their fair share." He states that Ontario is on record and will continue to fund on the 40-60 split they're committed to funding to the farmers of Ontario. Do you know what? The minister and this government have done nothing but whine about Ontario getting its fair share of the safety net dollars from the federal government.

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This is the minister's statement in December, that the Harris government is prepared to put up their fair share of the funding: "If the federal Liberals do not give Ontario farmers their fair share ... our province may have no choice but to ... negotiate a made-in-Ontario safety net program." The federal government has put up its fair share. This government is not putting up its fair share to the farmers of this province.

Mr Mazzilli: How about health care, Steve?

Mr Peters: I'm talking about agriculture. There are so many other issues, but I'm talking about an issue that this government seems to have total disregard for, and that's agriculture. I am going to come back to this rural task force that toured around the province. You don't like to hear things that you're doing wrong. I think it's important to point out the areas where this government is not living up to the expectations and the needs of the people of Ontario, and one area is they are letting down the farmers of this province.

The minister spoke in April of this year, "It means that everyone will get a fair share of the money available. Regardless of where you farm in Canada, you will get the same benefits from the federal program." This is a bunch of baloney. This is not true for Ontario. Perhaps Mr Hardeman got more out of the federal government than he bargained for, and now he can't afford to put the money where his mouth is.

I want to talk too about some of these other initiatives that are supposed to be there for rural Ontario. The government is great on making announcements, but they are so short about the details. They talked about investing in economic development for rural and small towns. There is nothing there, no indication of when we're going to see the details of these programs.

Health: The government loves to tout their health care budget and what the government perceives to be reinvestments in health care in this province. Do you know what's very interesting? It's something the member for London-Fanshawe should be listening to, and I'm concerned about it, because he has a psychiatric hospital in his riding and I have a psychiatric hospital in my riding—two hospitals that are scheduled by this government to close. Do you know what? There is not a single mention in this health budget about mental health, not a single thing about mental health. How are you going to reinvest? The honourable members travelled around, but there's no talk about mental health, about the much-needed community supports that need to be in place before you close a single hospital bed. There is nothing in here about that. We've got two hospitals scheduled to close in our respective ridings, but those community supports aren't in place before those hospitals are going to close.

We had a program in my own riding, a community kitchen, which was a textbook definition of community support. The government wanted to close it down. If it wasn't for the intervention of the clients coming to my office, that program would have disappeared. Another

program, the ACES program that is part of the community support: In February, the government announced that it was going to close.

I want to talk about another initiative that has come out of this budget, and that is this whole issue of Telehealth. The Telehealth program was an initiative that took place in northern Ontario, and by all accounts, it's working relatively well. It has its problems, but it's something that is being done to try and help with some of the serious problems that exist within the health care sector. Now the program is going to be expanded. Do you know where they're expanding the program? They are expanding it in the greater Toronto area, an area that has such an oversupply of doctors, no shortage of doctors. Where you should be investing in this Telehealth is in rural Ontario. Rural Ontario has a severe shortage—the member for Simcoe North talked about the doctor shortages in his own riding.

Telehealth is something that could offer some assistance as we try and get over this hump, because the initiatives you're taking to try and attract new doctors and create new medical spaces are long-term initiatives. There is nothing in the short term. Telehealth was something that could have been of some great assistance to rural Ontario.

Let's look at some numbers, because I think if you're going to review the budget, it's best that you look at some of the numbers. You know, one area where there could have been some real, positive things done for this province is in gasoline tax: 14.7 cents out of every litre that you pump into your car today goes to the provincial government in gasoline tax. We're the second-highest province in all of Canada when it comes to gasoline tax, and the government is projecting in this budget that they're going to take more money from our pockets through gasoline tax. If you wanted to do something useful, why didn't you look at the whole area of gasoline tax? But you didn't.

I want to talk about a few other areas. The government, of course, is only going to tout the positives that are contained in this budget, but I think the citizens of Ontario need to be made aware of some of the serious issues that are in here: the cuts to environment, the cuts to natural resources. Substantial cuts. Do you know, we spend more on jails in this province than the combined budgets of natural resources and environment? There's no commitment by this government to the natural resources of this province; there's no commitment to environment in this province—commitments that could have taken the form of investments in public transportation. Let's hear real guarantees that before these coal-fired plants are sold by Ontario Hydro, they're going to be converted to natural gas. There's no investments in there.

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing: down. Natural Resources: down. Training, Colleges and Universities, if you look at the budget from 1995 to 2001: down. Transportation: down. Here's a great one, and I'm hoping that somebody can give me an interpretation of what this is—

Mr Mazzilli: Transfer payments from the federal government: down.

Mr Peters: I wish the member would just keep his mouth shut and listen, because maybe he would learn something.

Executive offices: I'd like to know what "executive offices" is. Perhaps somebody can explain in their two minutes how whatever executive offices is has gone from \$13 million in 1996-97 to \$22 million in 2000-01. What is that all about?

Capital expenditures: Capital expenditures in this province have decreased by \$2.5 billion. Instead of giving \$8 billion in tax cuts across this province, why don't we start renewing our investment in the infrastructure of this province, an infrastructure that's crumbling all around us? That is not being done.

They talk about the initiative of lower corporate taxes, but changes to the corporate tax rate aren't the only thing that is going to help attract new business and industry to this province. You need to invest in our infrastructure. You're not doing that. They're not investing in our roads. They're not investing in our sewers. Look at the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, the ministry that's responsible for bringing new investment into this province. Do you know how much their budget has been cut since this government took office? A hundred million dollars. How are you going to attract? You need to be out there selling this province.

Speaker, I could go on and on about this budget, because there are so many things in it. You're going to hear the things that the government thinks are right. I think it's incumbent on us to tell you what's wrong with this budget. I think it's a real shame and the citizens of Ontario are not going to be feeling the real effects.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Mazzilli: It's a pleasure to be back in the House. I just want to remind the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London that what we are debating here is the Taxpayer Dividend Act. Not once in his 20 minutes did he mention that this money belongs back to taxpayers in Ontario. This is the \$1 billion that was set aside by the finance minister. It doesn't belong to the finance minister. It doesn't belong to the province. It belongs to the taxpayers of Ontario. Not once did he mention that. You know, at some point he can go back to his riding and speak to the workers at the Talbotville Ford plant. When they go to work, they work hard for their money. When the government collects their money and does not return it to them—and some of them work shift work. Perhaps he could canvass the Ford plant and some of the other auto manufacturing plants in his riding to see how they think that \$1 billion should be spent: by a Liberal government or returned to the taxpayers of Ontario?

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He also neglected to mention health care spending over the last number of years. It's an important issue in my riding as it is in his. When you look at 1995, Ontario spent \$17.4 billion on health care. Today it's going to be up to \$22.7 billion, and that's no thanks to the federal

Liberal government, which has continued to cut transfers to this province and today only funds 11%—

Hon Mr Baird: Ten now.

Mr Mazzilli: —10% of the overall funding.

The Liberals want to talk about priorities. Where are their priorities? I know that our priorities on this side of the House are on health care and a responsibility to the taxpayers in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further comments and questions?

Mr Duncan: I am pleased to respond to my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London with respect to his comments on the budget and, first of all, to reinforce what he said in his very first statement, that we will vote against this bill. We are opposed to this so-called dividend, which I would call the most glorified advertising campaign in the history of any government, save and except Jesse Ventura in Minnesota.

My colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London was quite proper to state the shortcomings of the budget. He was right to point out the fact that the government has its priorities wrong. You could have spent more money on health care; you chose not to. You want to blame the federal government. But as my colleague from St Catharines said earlier this evening, you want more money from the federal government not so you can improve health care but so you can give more selective tax cuts to your special friends. You've failed in the environment. You've failed in colleges and universities. You've failed in public transportation. You've failed in public housing. Let me say that those failures will come back to haunt the government.

The member opposite who responded to my colleague seemed a bit confused about priorities. But I'm not surprised, because I heard Tom Long say the economy is not doing so well. I heard Tom Long say that, and I'm sure my colleague said that. I know most of them are supporting Tom Long for the leadership of the Canadian Alliance/Reform. Lord knows what's going to happen to Progressive Conservatives in this province in their ridings individually, who feel very betrayed by these people. Your confusion is natural when you hear Tom Long complain about what hasn't been done for the economy of this country.

I say it's unfortunate there aren't more members like the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, who quite properly pointed out the shortcomings of your government, particularly in the area of agriculture, an industry that I know is important to his riding. He is to be commended for his outstanding observations.

Mr Young: I listened with interest to the member opposite this evening. I would say, with the greatest respect to this chamber, that it's most unfortunate for the member opposite that in the past his party has committed many of their unrealized promises to writing. But for that, what he said might make some sense. Unfortunately, from the Liberals' point of view, they did in fact commit to writing many promises over the last number of elections and I, being a bit of a packrat, have kept those

documents in which they wrote down their promises to the people of Ontario. It then of course came as a great surprise to me to hear the member opposite—

Interjection.

Mr Young: That's the Liberal red book.

Interjection.

Mr Young: No, indeed it is. It is the Liberal red book. This is the platform the Liberal Party of this province ran on. This is the written platform they presented to the people of this province when they said, "Please elect us." The people rejected that notion, thank goodness. But they came forward and said, "Please elect us, and we will do this."

What is "this?" Here is what they suggested they would do. Here's what they committed to do if they were elected. They said they would reduce the corporate tax rate for small businesses and reduce the number of small businesses required to file corporate minimum tax.

I invite the members opposite to look at the documents they prepared and look at the budget that was tabled by the Deputy Premier of this province last week, and they will find that we are now proceeding with those very promises. If they want to be sincere, if they want to be credible to the people of Ontario come the next election, they will vote for this budget, which makes a great deal of sense, which returns money to the taxpayers of this province, which pays down the debt and which continues to stimulate this economy.

The Acting Speaker: Further comments and questions?

Mr Bradley: Every time I hear government members on the other side speak, I hear Brian Mulroney's voice, because this is the Mulroney crowd. I notice that Tom Long is now trying to separate himself from Brian Mulroney, but half the people over there worked for Mulroney in one way or another. Now they're denying him thrice, or whatever it is after three—quadruply.

First of all, on promises—and our member for Elgin-Middlesex-London didn't get a chance to say this—I look at the fact that they said, "We keep our promises." I remember during the 1995 election campaign, in May during the leaders' debate, Robert Fisher of Global TV asked Premier Harris—he was then Conservative Leader Harris—"Is it your plan to close hospitals?" Mike Harris said, "Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals." Forty-five hospitals have been closed or forced to merge in the province—one of the two. Forty-five closed or forced to merge—radically changed. That is a promise the Premier of this province made.

Second, I notice today that the price of gas is up over 70 cents a litre in Toronto. The only reason I say that is

that Mike Harris is rough and tough when it comes to the lower echelons in terms of power in our society, but when it comes to the oil barons, the captains of the oil industry, he's like a pussycat. He just backs off when they bark at him.

The last thing I can say is that one place where this government will invest a lot of money, where it will do a lot of spending, is in political advertising, using the hard-earned tax dollars of people in this province to put out clearly partisan, blatant propaganda.

The Acting Speaker: Response, the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London.

Mr Peters: I extend my apologies to the member for Nepean-Carleton for the tone of my voice. But if there wasn't so much heckling on the other side of the room, I wouldn't have to speak as loudly. I extend my apologies.

The member for London-Fanshawe makes reference to the Ford plant. He also makes reference to blaming the feds, which he's really good at. The Ford plant, though, depends on just-in-time delivery. Investments in the 401 infrastructure are going to benefit industries like the Ford plant.

The member for Windsor-St Clair had it right: The government's priorities are all wrong.

To the member for Willowdale: I didn't campaign on the red book. That wasn't my campaign tool. The member for Willowdale also made references to promises made, promises kept. I can tell you of a promise that was made and not kept. That's the promise that was made in writing by Premier Harris on May 24, 1995, that he would pass a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act within the first term in the Legislature—a promise made, a promise not kept.

The member for St Catharines talked about promises made, and very clearly pointed out some promises that were made and, again, not kept. I think the member for St Catharines touched on another very important area, and that's this whole question of government advertising. The taxpayers are sick and tired of seeing their tax dollars wasted on advertising programs. In this I'm going to cast blame on both levels of government: on this provincial government for the dollars they have wasted in this whole health care fight, which could have been better invested in the health care system, and on my distant-relative friends in Ottawa for their spending of those dollars too. That's not the way to do it.

I appreciate the opportunity to have those words, and I thank the members for their comments.

The Acting Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 2129.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 11 May 2000

Jeudi 11 mai 2000

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Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 11 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 11 mai 2000

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

E-COMMERCE ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE COMMERCE ÉLECTRONIQUE

Mr Hastings moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act with respect to Electronic Information, Documents and Payments / Projet de loi 70, Loi concernant les renseignements, les documents et les paiements électroniques.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I'm profoundly delighted to participate in today's discussion of Bill 70. I hope everybody will join with me, as we can make history today in ensuring that Ontario joins the Internet communications revolution going on in the 21st century.

There isn't any doubt in my mind: Bill 70 proposes that Ontario recognize digital signatures as the legal equivalent of our paper signatures that we use so often today; also, that all contracts made electronically be made legally binding.

In my estimation, Ontario must show initiative in this electronic age where more and more businesses and everyday activities of our citizens are being conducted on the Internet. This legislation, I believe, will have a positive impact on the demand for Ontario's products and services on-line and encourage and promote the growth of e-commerce in Ontario's communities throughout the 21st century. Furthermore, I think it will help sustain one of the longest economic growth cycles we have seen in recent economic history, certainly since World War II.

In my estimation, we must foster an environment that supports e-commerce and entrepreneurship. This bill represents an opportunity for Ontario to show vision and demonstrate leadership in this Internet age.

This law will introduce a measure of certainty to the world of e-commerce in Ontario and provide a measure of convenience for citizens or businesses in this province.

As you know, our existing laws regarding legal and binding relationships, including contracts, were developed for a paper-based system and economic model, and whether we like it or not, that system is fast becoming a way of the past. Every day more and more

people are accessing the Internet and using it to conduct business, purchase goods, communicate with grandparents and grandchildren and families throughout the world, and interact with government. In this fast-paced world, people do not have the time any more, unfortunately, to wait in line or on the phone for government services.

Instead of going to their local banks, more and more people are paying their bills on-line and conducting other transactions on-line via the Internet. This convenience should also be provided by the province of Ontario to its citizens. This law would take a leading role in promoting an accessible and Internet-friendly government.

If e-commerce over the Internet is to develop, consumers and businesses will require the ability to make contracts with digital signatures. This government must be in the forefront of the development of this economic model in order to promote and enhance e-commerce business and entrepreneurship well into the 21st century.

I also believe and hope that you will all join with me in the second reading of this significant and historic bill as the federal government has already translated a similar set of laws from a national perspective. Ontario being the economic engine that it is and has been regarded as being for the last 132 years or more of Confederation, I believe this measure will not only significantly improve our economic leadership across this country, but will reduce economic barriers over time, particularly intra-provincial barriers in trade, so that we can have a more prosperous economy, with more people working than we've ever had in the history of this great country.

As well, Canada has become—as has been noted so often in this chamber and, as has been quoted by members of this government, the United Nations regards Canada very highly—one of the best countries in which to live, work, raise a family and invest. We are attracting more and more newcomers on a daily basis. Within that broad context, I think the E-Commerce Act, 2000, will provide significant leadership in creating jobs, but more than that, in providing for the future well-being of our citizens and future citizens in the 21st century.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): It's a great honour for me to have an opportunity to participate in discussion on the private member's bill by the member for Etobicoke North. I will be sharing my time with the member for Brant, my colleague and friend.

As the Liberal Party science and technology critic, and as one, like so many members in this place, who is both struggling with and challenged by the use of new tech-

nologies to improve the efficiency of the services we provide, this is a timely debate. I would say it's a timely debate but interesting in one very significant way, that we're debating this as a piece of private member's legislation.

It's my intention to support this private member's bill by the member for Etobicoke North. It's unlikely that he and I will share similar instincts on too many things, but I do believe this is a good start.

1010

I would say at the outset that on this side we're surprised that on an issue like this the vacuum is left to be filled by a private member in the absence of meaningful government legislation. I would like to put on record our view that while this bill is a good start, we believe that it merits significant consideration by committee, and that we need the government, from a ministry-by-ministry standpoint, to take a look at what this legislation does and also at what this legislation doesn't do, in the broad minefield of regulation with respect to the Internet and electronic activities.

We had yesterday in this House a very poignant point of personal privilege raised by my colleague the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, and what that highlighted was one of the things this bill does not deal with: the protection of privacy for individuals. I believe we have seen from this government a wanton disregard for the privacy of citizens, and in the case of the point of privilege by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, the privileges of customers of the Province of Ontario Savings Office.

I believe there's a very important message we need to send alongside this, and that is that we recognize that electronic commerce, paperless transactions, ought to bear the same burden of responsibility with respect to the protection of privacy as do transactions which have paper, and I'm not sure that's a standard this government has lived up to.

The member for Etobicoke North in his opening comments mentioned, without referencing the bill's number, Bill C-6 in the federal House. Not having had a chance to take an extensive look at that bill, I understand that bill also dealt with privacy provisions.

In terms of putting on the record our concerns, I would state, first and foremost, two. Number one, we believe the government should have had an initiative on this rather than leaving the vacuum to be filled—well, I might add, but filled nevertheless—by a private member's bill. This is a consideration that the government needs to take a look at, and in committee I believe we need to do that. We need to ensure that more work is done. All citizens should be very concerned about the absence of privacy protection as a topic of discussion in the context of this legislation. Those are two comments I would like to recommend to the member, and I look forward to hearing his point of view on those in his closing comments.

I'm one of those who embraces these new technologies and I recommend to anyone watching that they log on to my Web site, georgesmitherman.com, and see all of

the interesting subjects we've got there. It is a way we're using to try and communicate more effectively with a very diverse populace and I'm very excited about it.

In the context of working towards trying to embrace technology, but at the same time protecting against excesses, we have some very real challenges. I believe that, with the engine of Ontario's economy, as the member has stated, we have a responsibility to ensure there is an appropriate balance between the desire to appropriately regulate and, at the same, to ensure governments don't provide a disincentive to moving forward in this way. There is some real concern, if we follow the debate around regulation, the discussions around how e-commerce transactions ought to take place. If we follow that debate from the United States, which is where the stuff is even more broadly used, there are dangers there. We see there are some who would begin to take a look at the ways they can tax those activities.

The member spoke at length in his comments about the extent to which this bill takes a look at the way we can provide services to our constituents and to the citizens of Ontario. We should all embrace service models which provide a broader range of activities, but I worry that this government will use that as an opportunity to cut off, for hard-to-service individuals and people in harder-to-service communities, face-to-face services provided by public servants and also the kind of information that can best be obtained by talking to a live person across a telephone line. Our party has very real concerns about the deterioration of service in that way. We hear so often the government talking about virtual services and I think that too often this can be an excuse actually to provide cover for diminishing public service and hiding behind the mask of technology.

I believe it provides great opportunities to provide an alternative range of services. We see a transition, many people wanting to receive government information and services that way, but let us not make a mistake in terms of moving forward and providing government with cover to actually diminish the amount of public services that are being provided.

We've seen some attempts in the last year or two from the Uniform Law Conference of Canada, an organization that's dedicated to harmonizing Canadian law. They've developed a uniform electronic commerce act that provides a legal framework, a model for e-commerce. Saskatchewan has embraced that, but I think it's interesting that in the Saskatchewan model we've seen a government bill amended for deficiencies very shortly after its passage. I think that helps to restate, to reinforce my view that we need to ensure that the committee that takes a look at this really views whether it meets all of those tests. Again, the absence of this being a government bill with all of the resources of the various ministries being put to it is something we highlight as a concern.

I believe we have a responsibility as government to do what we can to reassure the citizens of this province that the people of Ontario are well served by their Legislature with respect to this. I touched on privacy. I can't high-

light enough the extent to which those protections need to be built into legislation from this province and this government. We know of course of the crisis that struck so much of the wired world with respect to the "ILOVE YOU" e-mail problem, and this place, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, was as crippled as any organization. It highlights the extent to which we are all vulnerable on that. We have a responsibility to provide our citizens with a sense of assuredness that our legislators are working on this, and more work needs to be done.

We will be supporting this in principle. We think it's a step in the right direction. We expect and ask that the government embrace e-commerce and look for opportunities to provide better services to our citizens, but we expect that they will take a look at privacy provisions, which are not contained in this legislation, and which by their absence cause great concern to us on this side, and also that the government not use this as an opportunity to hide behind e-commerce as a service model at the expense of other service models which are particularly important in communities where language barriers and concerns around using technology are evident.

In the case of my own constituency, I have very serious problems with the withdrawal of banking services in poorer communities. Many more affluent people have embraced technology, but what's left behind are underserved communities. I also think that with respect to seniors there are some barriers there, although we know seniors are one of the groups that are increasingly using technology. My mother has recently joined the wired world and bombards me with "I love you" e-mails of the type that aren't problematic, and this is a good thing. But we need to make sure that government doesn't hide behind electronic commerce as a way of doing business and diminish services provided to the citizens in our province.

1020

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I'm pleased to join the debate. I think it's very timely that we have in front of us a matter that deals with privacy, given the issue we've dealt with over the last little while, which was brought to a head yesterday, talking about the amount of information that was inappropriately released—according to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, unlawfully—wherein the provincial savings office released not just the names and personal information in terms of addresses and phone numbers for all the people who had accounts there, for the purpose of giving it to a pollster who was going to poll those individuals to find out how they felt about the privatization of the office, but also, as we found out afterwards, the actual balances that were in the bank accounts of these Ontarians were given to pollsters. When the freedom of information commissioner was requested to delve into this, she was obstructed, and says so in her report.

It's good that the government, through one of its backbenchers, is saying, "We need to tighten it up, and here's a way to do it, through using the new technology that's available," and it is proper that we should consider that.

But there still have not been answers to the questions that were raised about the last breach, and it would seem to me that it is a bit hypocritical to argue that this is the most important thing—

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: "Hypocritical" is unparliamentary, and I would ask you to rule, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Sorry, I missed that. Of course it is not used in here, so if the member would withdraw that word.

Mr Christopherson: I don't believe I called anyone a hypocrite. I just used the word. But certainly, Speaker, I will withdraw.

I was saying that I found it somewhat—

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Paradoxical.

Mr Christopherson: Paradoxical—thank you. Very good; I appreciate the help. I found it somewhat paradoxical that at the same time as we're talking about the electronic transfer of information, we have a transfer of information in the old way that breached all the laws. The fact that we would now provide for electronic transfer, because that makes for more efficient government and savings for the taxpayer—but if at the end of the day we aren't protecting the personal information of the citizens better than we did under the old system, what have we really gained?

This is a concern that I think all Ontarians ought to be worried about. As I mentioned yesterday in the House, other than your personal finances, the only thing that's more important to you in terms of your right to privacy in a democracy like this is your medical records.

We're talking about transferring electronic information. Here's a government that transferred information to a private pollster about citizens that contained their bank account balances. That can never be acceptable, and yet this government refuses to do anything. They make some noise about, "Well, we've complied with what the commissioner has requested," or, "We're attempting to comply with what the freedom of information commissioner has brought forward," but she points out in her report that the job's not done. In fact, she takes the extraordinary step of outlining all the questions that remain to be answered, and a lot of them have to be, à la Watergate, who knew what when, and who approved what when?

We think this is a positive step. This is a good thing, a good use of new technology and an attempt to make sure that government stays on the cutting edge. But let's not lose sight of the fact that at the end of the day, governments have an incredible responsibility with all information. Whether they're transferring it by paper, by phone, by fax, by e-mail or other new electronic technology that's available, at the end of the day, one of the most important things about information is making sure that an individual's personal information is kept just that way—personal.

Somehow the government thinks, in this specific case, that they can just ignore what's happened. "Oh, well, the fact that nobody would talk to the commissioner when

they were requested to doesn't mean anything," or there's the fact that the commissioner points out that she has never seen an issue that received so much blockage in attempts to get answer to questions as she has in this particular case.

This is a good measure. Assuming things don't take a U-turn during the debate, I think we are going to be comfortable supporting it and I commend the member for bringing it forward. It's an important issue. But with the means of transferring information also has to come the absolute guarantee that citizens' rights around having information protected are to have equal priority. I would hope that other backbenchers would use this one opportunity we have to come to this place as individuals, as opposed to caucus members, to express their concern that they aren't satisfied their government has provided the answers the public are entitled to about this breach, not only of protocol, but according to the commissioner, of the law. We don't know at this point with any certainty that we won't end up with a criminal investigation, possibly even criminal charges. We don't know that.

So we would call on the government members to acknowledge that this is an important part of this subject, as much as the mechanics of transferring information: Where are the protections, especially when information is being moved around? That responsibility always, in the case of a majority government, lies with the government. We have one prime example of where they failed us. I would hope that anything new we move to in terms of new means of transferring information would have better protection than what you have offered the people of Ontario to date.

Ms Mushinski: I take great pleasure in rising to speak in support of Mr Hastings's E-Commerce Act, 2000, which will bring Ontario into the 21st century and obviously beyond.

It's important to stress that our government firmly believes in good customer service, and what this bill will do is provide convenience and service to the citizens of Ontario as they conduct business with this government. It will also set up the framework for the future of e-commerce in this electronic age.

By making electronic signatures the legal equivalent of paper signatures, we can ensure several things. We can ensure that the citizens of Ontario receive services in a timely and accessible manner—something, of course, that we strongly espouse in terms of improving customer service. We can also ensure that electronic signatures are legally equivalent to paper signatures.

By making contracts agreed to on-line legal and binding, we will be able to create an environment in Ontario that promotes and encourages economic growth through innovation and technology—something that is also very important to us as a government.

Ontario, as Canada's economic engine, must always make sure it has a vision for the future, by keeping up with technological advances in what we know is a very rapidly paced electronic age. We must also make sure

that our citizens have every opportunity to interact with the government in the most effective way.

As of now, there are a few ways that Ontarians can interact with the government electronically, such as paying fines and updating licences with the Ministry of Transportation, or reserving a campsite with the Ministry of Natural Resources. I think it's important that we keep pushing the envelope and raising the bar of expectations to ensure that we are not left behind.

This law will ensure that the Legislature of Ontario is ready for the innovations of electronic commerce and technology into the 21st century. I commend my colleague John Hastings for having the courage, the foresight and the vision to recognize the technological needs not just of present generations but of future generations and of society.

1030

Mr Levac: I will probably be giving a couple of minutes of my time, if it's OK, to the member from St Paul's.

I want to thank the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale for expressing our opinion on this side of the House.

First of all, I want to state very clearly that yesterday we were involved in history-making. I'm going to tie that in to this particular bill and I'm going to speak specifically to the bill in a moment.

The first thing I want to do is talk about yesterday's historic moment. In the House, for the first time ever, we passed a committee bill. It was done so with the co-operation of all members on all sides of the House in agreement. Bill 65 forms the Ontario Association of Former Parliamentarians. Now, that's a harmless situation, except it showed that we are capable, in a very quick moment, of doing something that's absolutely right and good for the province.

However, that being said, I want to come over to the bill today. I did mention yesterday that I believe we need to do some more reforming of private member's bills in order to get them to the House quicker so that we can make some decisions, as parties and as individuals, as to the value of those bills.

I want to speak to the value of this bill today. It does speak to an important point. The member from Etobicoke North is bringing to the House something that was neglected. We have had e-commerce for quite some time and it's been an open minefield. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, the government had not acted until now. As the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale has indicated, we believe that it needs to get discussed. I'm sure the member opposite introducing the bill would give us that opportunity at committee to make sure all of the little nuances are taken care of. I'm sure, as was mentioned by the Minister of Labour and a couple of other ministers, that we don't pass perfect legislation, and that there are glitches—using a computer technology term—that do come up. We have to take care of those.

I want to mention something very important for the record, and I'm glad the member who's introducing the

bill did take care of this. For the public, this act does not apply to wills, trusts created by wills, powers of attorney, documents created to transfer interests in land, registration and a prescribed class of document or instrument. Those things are not in this bill, and I want to thank the member for recognizing that very important point, because I think we need person-to-person on this.

What I also want to bring up, and the member from St Paul's is signaling me to go ahead and make reference to this—is that one of the things that is very important for us to recognize is that we're slowly taking human experience out of our transactions. When we did contract, it was person to person, at one time telephone to telephone; now we're talking computer to computer. The one thing computers still have yet to be able to do is duplicate emotion, the human connection; we have to concern ourselves with the "click, I agree" syndrome. If we click a button and say we agree, have we not been able to do that human transaction? We must be careful that we don't avoid the human interaction that is so dear and necessary when we come into these very important agreements. So there must be provisions and there must be something that we need to discuss that prevents us from getting into the "click, I agree" syndrome. I think that needs to be addressed, and I'm sure that all the members agree that we are probably desensitizing that human experience.

The one last comment I want to make is something that the banking industry has picked up on. When they made the transition to using fewer people, interacting people to people, they put their machines out first. They put all the bank machines out and got people used to those things. Now that we have e-commerce, we really have to be careful not to have that out there first.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I'm pleased to speak to this bill today. I think it's an important bill and I'm pleased that Mr Hastings has brought it forward. I don't think he and I have agreed on one thing in this House before.

Ms Mushinski: Sure you have.

Ms Churley: I don't think so. Tell me what else.

Mr Hastings: Stockwell Day.

Ms Churley: "Stockwell Day," he says. Heaven help us; protect us from Stockwell Day and Tom Long.

We're off the subject now and I want to come back to the bill, which I am supporting today. I would say that the electronic transfer of information and the conducting of business dealings electronically are not new, and certainly the time has come for legislation that sets clear rules for government and for the public and does so in a manner that is subject to scrutiny. My caucus is pleased that the member for Etobicoke North has followed the example of the NDP government in Saskatchewan. We wish his government were as forward-thinking as the NDP government in Saskatchewan, because they have already done that.

This is so important, and the electronic use of information and the lightning speed of technology are happening on a daily basis and we can hardly keep up with them. The younger generation is much more able to keep up

with the latest technology than I am. I'm constantly falling behind and having to learn. But it is moving at lightning speed. I just wonder why the government hasn't had the courage to bring forward a bill like this to, in an open and democratic way, with full public participation and scrutiny, bring Ontario into the 21st century. I'm pleased to see that Mr Hastings is trying to do that today.

I agree with the principle of the bill, that we need to provide for the electronic transfer of information, and I believe my caucus—although it is private member's hour—supports this. They're happy to let it pass second reading today so it can go to committee for full hearings all across Ontario and allow some of the concerns we have and that I'm sure the public would have to be addressed.

The thing is that you can do this right or you can do it wrong. Bill 70 gives us a chance to now address the issue. It's a good thing that we now have that opportunity. But we have some concerns. I'm far from sure at this point that this bill in its present form is acceptable. But I would say as well that quite frequently with private members' bills, once they go to hearings, some concerns and further information are added and amendments are made. Of course, that's why we need to pass it today, so we can have those hearings, and any changes we need to make, any considerations that have not been included in this bill, would come forward and we could make those amendments.

Some of the questions we have to ask are, will public access to public records be guaranteed? I'm sure we all agree that that is absolutely necessary. My colleague Peter Kormos raised the other day what happened under this government to court dockets. So before we consent to allow the government to replace paper record-keeping with electronic record-keeping, we must be certain that public access will in no way be compromised.

One of the first items of the bill, subsection 6(2), says that a person's consent to accept a document in an electronic form can be "inferred from the person's conduct." We have to ask, is that good enough? Then again, we have to look at how we will verify electronic signatures, and then how we will protect the security of electronic signatures? I'm sure those are things that Mr Hastings has thought about, and perhaps when he sums up he will provide some of his thinking on those questions.

Subsection 6(1) says, "Nothing in this act requires a person to use or accept information or a document in an electronic form."

This is fine and good, but only if that person can be certain that their entitlement to receive information from, for example, the province is not undermined if they cannot accept electronic information.

1040

Another question is, how can the transmission of electronic information be verified? That is a major concern, and it is not immediately clear that the bill covers that.

The issue that some of my colleagues have raised around privacy I think is pertinent, and I wouldn't say

just in the context of discussions around some of the things my colleague from Hamilton talked about, the Ontario savings account and the release of private information there, and some other concerns we have about private information being released to the public. In a larger context, technology is being developed at lightning speed and the potential for misuse of personal information is great. We're all aware of that, and people are somewhat concerned as there is more and more business and there are more transactions being conducted on the Internet and through our computers. Those are the things we have great concerns about. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't do it. It's time for us to move forward into the 21st century, and I'm glad we're addressing this issue today. So there are big concerns about privacy, about the protection of citizens' entitlement to information and access to information, about the verification of transfer and receipt of information, and finally, about the integrity of public records and about public access to public records.

Whether or not this bill meets the test remains to be seen. The rights of citizens and not the ease of business have got to be our first concern here. I believe that full public hearings are a must.

I will close by congratulating Mr Hastings for bringing this bill forward.

I'd like to tell people that if they want to check out my Web site, it is <http://www.MarilynChurley.com>. I'd be very pleased if people would take a look at that and get back to me and tell me what they think of it.

I appreciate all the e-mails that people send me. Let me use this opportunity to apologize to people if I'm not able to get back to them immediately. We know, of course, with the advancement of technology, that people can now sit down in front of their computers and get through to us right away and expect an immediate answer. We get hundreds of those. I want to thank the member again.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 70, An Act with respect to Electronic Information, Documents and Payments.

Once again the member for Etobicoke North has done an outstanding job in researching and preparing his private member's bill, and I am pleased to speak in favour of his initiative. I support this bill not just because it would help to make business transactions faster and easier, but also because enabling e-business creates more opportunities for more people to benefit and prosper from goods and services obtained on the Internet.

Specifically, we are talking about allowing people to electronically file documents and contracts with their signature over the Internet. This will provide a tremendous boost for ordinary citizens, business and governments and will help to put Ontario at the forefront of a new and ever-changing economy.

I want to note also that Bill 70 directly addresses the issue of getting rid of red tape, which we know and experience as wasted time, long lines and paper trails slowing the path toward the services we may need. That

is what makes this bill particularly democratic and consistent with this government's effort to reduce unneeded regulations and unnecessary paper burdens. Less red tape means more access to services, and that means more equity and enhanced democracy. If this measure is enacted, there will be far less red tape.

So far, this government has eliminated over 1,000 regulations that were laid to rest by our red tape reduction plan. We have made that effort permanent by creating a Red Tape Commission, headed up by Frank Sheehan, the former MPP for Lincoln.

Bill 70 is exactly the kind of measure we need to enhance this effort, and with its passage we will likely be talking about a far greater number of unneeded regulations gone in the near future: reams upon reams of paper that will disappear, I am sure.

In my riding of Waterloo-Wellington, we are part of what is known and even renowned as Canada's technology triangle, or CTT. The CTT is also at the forefront of the electronic revolution, and I'm pleased the government has worked in partnership to help them pave the way. The CTT is the place to start with partnerships for growth in the new economy. The triangle region has the right mix of rural and urban area, along with solid government and business expertise, which combine to make it the leading example of how communications technology can help provide an exceptional quality of life and enhance economic vitality.

The Ontario government has played a leading role in developing leading-edge infrastructure in the CTT through the telecommunications access partnership program. In fact, two of these information highway projects are located in the region: the rural Waterloo community network and the Waterloo information network.

Recently, I had the pleasure of joining the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Natural Resources in Waterloo for the announcement of a new initiative to further advance the information highway in Ontario, a program called Connect Ontario. This SuperBuild initiative will invest \$82 million that will improve Internet and electronic connections within, between and worldwide for 50 Ontario communities. Connect Ontario will enhance the competitiveness of our communities in the new digital economy and foster growth in jobs, new investment and economic development opportunities. As the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology said in reply to my recent question to him in the House, "We are leading Canada, indeed we're leading North America, in Internet connectedness," a government record we should be proud of.

As I conclude my remarks on the point of leadership, I want to return to the leadership brought to this House by the member for Etobicoke North. At a time when there is some concern that all governments may be having difficulty responding quickly enough to the changes of an ongoing information revolution, the government stays ahead, and this member, the MPP for Etobicoke North, shows how one member can keep us ahead.

Here are some other notable accomplishments by the member that should be recognized today:

The member for Etobicoke North has a remarkable record of bringing forward private members' bills which seek to improve the quality of life for all Ontarians. His bill to permit large private donations to hospitals was immediately recognized in our government's first budget.

He has since brought forward many private members' bills and resolutions to, among other things, establish taxpayer rights legislation; encourage private sector investment in classroom technology; recognize the contributions of Canadian historical figures; enhance grandparents' rights; license locksmiths; and make the purchase of computers more affordable for families and students.

Most significantly, I think, it was the member for Etobicoke North who called upon all Canadian provinces and the federal government to pay tribute to Princess Diana's life. His work in this area has resulted in the donation of over \$1 million to Canadian children's charities.

When you look at the diverse range of issues that have been brought forward by this member in the Ontario Legislature in terms of private members' bills and at the very broad range of issues that have been canvassed over the years by this member, he has made a very significant contribution.

This Bill 70 is part of that legacy, part of that record of accomplishment of this member, and I would encourage all members of this House to support it today.

1050

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to follow the member for Waterloo-Wellington, who has ably described the purpose and scope of Bill 70, the member for Etobicoke North's bill.

I want to make it very clear from the beginning that certainly I will be supporting Bill 70. I would like to commend the member for Etobicoke North, as the member for Waterloo-Wellington has. When you look at his record and his interests, they are very diverse and very forward-thinking. I don't think there's anyone who has been critical of any of the actions, in a legislative sense, that the member has taken, and that should be on the record. I want to recognize it. He works quietly and effectively.

In fact, I could say he's ahead of the ball on this thing. The province and the ministries responsible have been diligently working on the whole issue of e-commerce, or being connected, if you will, but in a formal, legal sense, I think he's months ahead of the government introducing legislation on this, and I think much of his bill will be reflected in it. So it's an appropriate time for opposition members to bring forward concerns so that government members can listen and can amend in any future attempts at change.

What does e-commerce mean in Bill 70? I'm looking at a copy here, and I think it's important for those who may be watching to understand what this whole e-commerce or e-business is all about. If you look in the

definition section, section 1 of the bill, it describes "electronic" as follows: "includes created, recorded, transmitted or stored in digital form or in other intangible form by electronic, magnetic or optical means or by any other means that has capabilities for creation, recording, transmission, or storage similar to those means and 'electronically' has a corresponding meaning."

It's a technical definition, but nonetheless—a lot of people ask me, "What do you mean by an electronic signature?" for instance. It isn't something that we transmit in sort of an art form, our name signature. What he has defined here as "electronic signature" is: "means information in electronic form that a person has created or adopted in order to sign a document and that is in, attached or associated with the document." So it could be a series of number or other kinds of digital pieces of information that represent that person's electronic signature.

The point was made earlier about the impersonal nature of moving forward in this venue of electronic communication, and I certainly recognize that. It doesn't negate the responsibility each of us has to keep the human contact there, even though when I do my banking at the automatic teller machine, it's more convenient for me on the way home at night to drop in and pay my bills and do the other transactions. More conveniently, if I look at what we can actually do electronically today, it's fascinating. In a general sense, I think the whole B2B thing we hear about, business-to-business communication, the whole Internet or faxing—all of that kind of digital world is just exploding all around us. If we don't deal with it, and this is what the member's trying to do, we're not going to be prepared. We need a framework, a legislative framework, to think about it.

I'm going to list some of the things I've done. I've actually bought a book on-line. I've bought a trip, planned it and got the maps of another country on-line by signing on. I have an e-commerce account with TD-Waterhouse and have traded stocks on-line. I have an account. I've placed orders for various things, from books to stocks. I've downloaded information forms. Of course I have my own government member's Web site, which is john_otoole@ontla.ola.org. Plus, yesterday, at the CAP site in my riding of Durham, in Clarington, we opened up a new Web site. The students of Courtice Secondary School, with their teacher, Mr John Winder, working in partnership with co-op students, have developed and written all of the code for my own Web site, which was launched yesterday. I could say more about that. I have a co-op student who's actually inputting the data. You'll be able to sign on to my Web site in my riding and get everything from the budget to booking a campsite.

Telemedicine was mentioned in the budget. The previous member mentioned Con-nect Ontario, which complements the virtual classroom, videoconferencing. It's amazing what you can do today electronically. That being said, it really expands everyone's opportunity to become more accessible. It has been a long time in

coming, but it's essential that we become prepared for what Alvin Toffler called the third wave, the new world, the new order in that respect. Also, I wouldn't like to negate the personal responsibility issues, the privacy issues. I think the member for Etobicoke North has done a wonderful job to bring this legislation forward. I can tell you I'll be supporting it, and I know most of the members in the House today, if not all, will be supporting it. Again, I commend you for that, and thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning.

The Acting Speaker: For a response, the member for Etobicoke North.

Mr Hastings: I'd like to extend my personal appreciation to all the members who spoke today on Bill 70, the E-Commerce Act. In my estimation, this piece of legislation or whatever comes out of the sausage machine, the legislative process in committee, can be a significant advancement in formalizing the everyday legal activities going on in business and in social activities of citizens in this great province. All you have to do is go on the Net at whatever Web site and you can see the plethora of new business models that are emerging—from the old economy actually: the pulp and paper industry; the chemical and plastics; the new media and entertainment industries; the publishing industry; on-line education. Internet voting is very near us and it has significant implications for the Legislative Assembly.

I think many members in this House already have—and if they haven't, I would heartily advocate and endorse that they get one—a Web site. Mine is at www.johnhastings.com. It's another way of communicating with people.

I want to emphasize that I'm not fascinated by the technology, that in and of itself it's something magical—it is, in a way—but it's simply another piece of hardware or software to advance knowledge, to bring better communications and services and products to the people of this province.

Finally, I'd like to comment on some the concerns from members opposite. I think they raised some significant issues, and one is the issue of privacy. When this goes to committee, I think that's what we will see addressed. I'd also recommend a book dealing—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. This completes the time allocated for debate. The question will be put at 12 o'clock noon.

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN PROSTITUTION ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS QUI SE LIVRENT À LA PROSTITUTION

Mr Bartolucci moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to protect Children involved in Prostitution / Projet de loi 6, Loi visant à protéger les enfants qui se livrent à la prostitution.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm very happy today that we have children in the audience, because this bill deals solely and entirely with their protection. In the forward to the Progress of Nations, Kofi Annan, secretary general of the United Nations, wrote in part: "The day will come when nations will be judged not by their military or economic strength, nor by the splendour of their capital cities or public buildings but ... by the provision that is made for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged, and by the protection that is afforded to the growing minds and bodies of our children." It is in that context that I would like to begin our debate today.

My private member's bill, Bill 6, has a history, I believe, worth mentioning. I first introduced An Act to protect Children involved in Prostitution back on May 12, 1998. At that time it was known as Bill 18 and there was no other jurisdiction in Canada that had enacted this legislation. The bill passed second reading on May 28 and went to the standing committee on social development. It received a number of days of public hearings: August 17 in Sudbury, August 18 in London, September 28 and 29 in Toronto, October 5 in Toronto; and clause-by-clause was scheduled for October 5 as well.

During public hearings the committee members heard over 50 deputations from both individuals and organizations. Individual presentations were made by former and current child prostitutes, like Meaghan, who so passionately said she needed this type of legislation because she was desperately looking for a way out of this lifestyle of sexual exploitation.

We also heard from parents like Alan, whose child was a child prostitute. He pleaded with committee members to pass this bill so that their children, in particular his child, could be protected from the exploitation and sexual abuse at the hands of pimps and johns preying on their children.

Organizations which showed strong support for this bill were countless. The bill received support from several social services agencies, such as the John Howard Society of Sudbury, the Toronto Child Abuse Centre and Covenant House, to mention only a few. In addition, in excess of 30 police chiefs from across the province, including the Sudbury Regional Police Service and the York Regional Police Service, then under the leadership of Toronto's current chief of police, Julian Fantino, wrote in support of this legislation. After all this, Bill 18 unfortunately died when the House prorogued in December 1998.

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I reintroduced the bill on April 26, 1999. It was then called Bill 10. Again the bill did not survive the dissolution of the Legislature and the call, of course, of the 1999 provincial election. I reintroduced the bill for a third time in this Parliament on October 26 which brings us to today's second reading debate. I thank the House, especially Claudette Boyer, for moving my bill up 30 spots so that we could debate it today.

The purpose of the bill is to protect children under 18 who are involved in prostitution. The bill gives police

officers the power, with a warrant, to remove a child involved in prostitution and return the child to his or her family or to place the child in a protective safe house. The police officer may also apprehend a child without a warrant where the child's life or safety is seriously endangered. If a child is brought to a protective safe house under this act, a child protection worker shall be responsible for the child and for determining whether to return the child to his or her parent, to a person who had care and control of the child before the child was taken out of the situation or to another adult who is capable of providing for the child's needs.

The child protection worker may also decide to apply to the court for an order under section 57 of the Child and Family Services Act, for example, for a supervision order, a society wardship order, a crown wardship order etc. The bill would allow a child, his or her parent or a child protection worker to apply to the court for a restraining order against the person who has abused the child or who is encouraging the child or is likely to encourage the child to engage in prostitution. The bill makes it an offence for a person to encourage a child to engage in prostitution. The penalty for the persons known as "johns" and "pimps" is a fine of up to \$25,000, imprisonment for up to 24 months or both a fine and imprisonment.

As you can see, the bill works in tandem or in conjunction with the Child and Family Services Act. It is an act, though, and I do not make any apology, that deals solely with the sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children through prostitution. It does not conflict with but rather enhances other pieces of provincial legislation to ensure that these vulnerable children are no longer exploited but are protected.

I said earlier that there was no such legislation in place when Bill 18 first received second reading support. Since then, Alberta has passed identical legislation, and I make no apology for learning from other provinces about good child protection legislation. In fact, they passed it on February 1, 1999. In June 1999, the Alberta government heard from several stakeholders involved in this. Here's what some of the youth said: "Going to a protective safe house is good because it removed me from the high-risk situation."

Police in urban areas of Edmonton and Alberta who have experience with this legislation view it as an overwhelming success. To date—and I'll give you some accurate statistics from Alberta—310 children have been removed from dangerous situations and put back into protective safe houses. Sadly, though, the average age of these children removed has been 15.5 years of age.

During public hearings and since I reintroduced this bill, I have received many letters of support. Let me read only a few to you. Julian Fantino, the police chief of Toronto, "We welcome any initiative which serves to discourage and sanction those who would lead our youth into prostitution, a life which offers no hope, no future, and an inevitable crushing of the human spirit."

Mike Beauparlant, then the head of the juvenile task force of the Toronto Police Service, said: "This bill

would be a unique tool.... I can tell you that a frustration that I have experienced over the last 10 to 12 years is that I have seen children we were able to address who were 15. A week later they are 16 and I have to cringe and watch as they enter the car, unable to do anything."

Shelley Hallett, who is a legal counsel for the Ministry of the Attorney General, wrote to the Toronto Police Service back when there were Bill 18 hearings, and she said: "The Bartolucci bill attempts to address deficiencies in child welfare legislation in dealing with child and youth prostitution. If passed, it will have significant ramifications in terms of the powers of police and child welfare authorities to deal with youth who are presently, by law, out of the purview of these authorities. Many police officers who deal regularly with youth involved in prostitution, including members of the Toronto Police juvenile task force, have been calling for legislation that would allow them greater powers...."

Finally, Zonta, which is an international worldwide service organization of executives in business and the professions working together to advance the status of women, states in a letter dated March 1, 2000: "We note that the bill received the unanimous consent of all parties on first reading this session. We also noted that Premier Harris was reported in the press following the Premier's conference last summer to have stated that"—dealing with Alberta's similar legislation—"Ontario wants to move quickly to draw up new legislation in co-operation with other provinces to apprehend and protect juveniles who work as prostitutes."

I look forward to the debate that we will have over the course of the next 45 minutes, and I ask simply that you search yourselves and ask, is this legislation in the best interests of those children who are being sexually abused and exploited through prostitution?

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Let me start off by answering that question and saying, yes, I do support the direction of this bill. I will be voting for it. I do have a lot of comments that I will make about it. I have some reservations. I think the bill can be improved, but I do think that most of us on this side of the House are very supportive of this legislation and commend the member opposite for bringing it forward.

Before I go further, I'd like to welcome to the House today some folks from the St Ann's Adult Learning Centre from my riding of Niagara Falls. Welcome, to the members from St Ann's.

I know there are other members on this side of the House who have spoken to the Solicitor General on this bill. I have spoken to the Attorney General. I have spoken to the good member from Ottawa, Judge Guzzo, who has a great deal of experience in this field. He has some thoughts on the bill. We all very much respect his views on all of these law-and-order issues, someone with his experience, and I look forward to continuing to talk to him about the details of the bill.

I'd also like to mention, and congratulate once again, the member from Cambridge, Mr Martiniuk. As everyone knows, we have a crime commission that he chairs; he

has for years. I think he's done more to help fight crime in the province of Ontario in the last couple of years than a lot of people. So I congratulate him.

I do want to say before I get into some detailed thoughts on the bill that the government really takes seriously the need to protect children. Our record is very clear on that. We proclaimed, and I believe all members of the Legislature, both the NDP and Liberal parties also supported, the new Child and Family Services Act, passed on March 31. These are the first major changes to that protection act in 10 years. We implemented a new risk assessment model which would help child protection workers better assess whether a child is at risk. We've developed a province-wide database to track high-risk families. We've improved the child protection training program.

Since December 1995—everyone should really pay attention to this—we have hired more than 790 new child protection workers, a 34% increase, and right now they are still hiring more. I think we'll get up to about 1,000 new workers in short order. In fact, in my own area our family and children's services are having difficulty finding good, qualified people to fill those roles. So that's a great record that we're very proud of and we'll wear that on our sleeve.

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In addition, reflecting the increase in workers, \$650 million is now spent on child protection in our CASs. That's an 80% increase since 1995. So I'm proud of that record, and I did want to get that on the record before I move forward with discussion on the bill.

I've read Mr Bartolucci's bill very thoroughly. I will be speaking with him in the near future on some of the details I have. I have a few questions I think we need to deal with. For instance, section 3 deals with warrants obtained via telephone. The idea is a great one, that they can get warrants more quickly and easily. I'm concerned, actually, that some of it might be a little too cumbersome, and I'd like to talk to the member opposite and find out how we can make it even less cumbersome so that when a child is in imminent danger and a police officer has reasonable grounds to believe that a child is in danger, they can more easily get a warrant to help out.

I notice that in section 4 the member quite rightly provides that a police officer can get in without a warrant when a child's life is "seriously and imminently endangered because the child is engaging in prostitution." Again, I'd like to talk to him about the test: "seriously and imminently in danger." Any child who is engaging in prostitution under the influence of a scumbag pimp who has taken a young child and influenced them or physically intimidated them to do this—I think it should be very easy for police officers to stop that and to intervene, and I want to make sure that we don't make a test that's too high. I want to talk to the member about that.

One of the concerns that I do have is under section 5 of the bill: "If a police officer apprehends a child under this act, the police officer shall notify a child protection

worker immediately that the child has been apprehended and inform the worker as to whether the child has been returned to the child's parent" or brought to a protective safe house. We may need to bring in the child protection worker sooner so that once the police officer intervenes and has the child, he then goes to the child protection worker and in conjunction with that child protection worker then decides what the appropriate place is for this person, rather than leaving it to the officer to make that decision.

So there are some concerns. I have several others. I have members on this side of the House who would like to talk to the bill. I've gone beyond the five minutes that I had allotted to talk to this, so I'm going to step aside now. I will support the bill. I will talk further to Mr Bartolucci about the concerns I've mentioned and a few others. I'd like to turn the floor over now to some of the other members.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I am very pleased to speak to this bill. My only disappointment with it is that this government did not enact it previously to this. I commend the member for Sudbury for hanging in and supporting what is a very necessary piece of legislation.

I bring to it a CAS perspective. I have been a member of the board of directors for 24 years, through some very difficult years. I recall 1995 when we laid off a substantial number of staff because of cutbacks from this government. I am pleased that in some ways they've recognized the error of their ways and are restoring the funding to bring some of the people back.

My wife and I have also served as foster parents. We're now in our 14th year. Many of the young people who have been dragged into prostitution are there as a reflection of things that are happening at home. When I was first on the board there was no such thing as sexual abuse. When there was an allegation of sexual involvement with a child, everything stopped at the agency, because it simply was not heard of. Now the cases number in the hundreds in our riding alone. Is that a reflection of better reporting or is it a reflection of more activity? I'm not sure. I tend to believe that it's a reflection of both, that there is more involvement of children in sexual activities. But if someone is involved in prostitution, there is an adult involvement somewhere with it.

I think I can reflect the statement of everyone in this House of how appalled they were at the BC court decision which said that possession of child pornography was legal. For there to be child pornography, there has to be a victim. I'm absolutely appalled that a court would condone the possession of material such as that.

The intriguing thing that has amazed me in dealing with children who have been sexually abused—we have fostered substantial numbers of them and are aware of children as young as two being involved in the production of pornographic movies—is that the children know it's wrong. Without exception, the children know that what they're doing is wrong. We were concerned, when

we first started to foster, that in dealing with children who had been sexually abused or involved in prostitution, they would bring discussions into our house that we really didn't want talked about at the family table with our natural children. The reality is, they don't want to talk about it. They're embarrassed, they're ashamed and they know that what has happened to them is wrong. Yet adults have involved them in an activity that adults are prepared to overlook and to ignore the moral approach to.

The real problem with children involved in prostitution, from a foster parent viewpoint, is their memories. When a child is led into a lifestyle such as that, when caught by this bill and when brought to a place of protection, which is what has to happen, for the rest of their life their life fabric has been altered by what they have experienced. It is impossible to erase that memory.

We have worked with children of 10 and 11 years of age who know things that they should not have to know, but they can't forget them. The effect of involving children in prostitution is to steal their childhood, it's to remove that wonderful part of life's experience that they are entitled to and should experience. But once that fabric has been torn and they are made part of this evil activity, it can't be erased, they can't forget it.

This bill does wonders to ensure that very quickly they're entitled to the protection that they are owed by us as adults and us as legislators. But it also introduces a responsibility on this government, and that is to provide support for these young people once they're in a place of protection. They invariably require counselling. They invariably require supports. They invariably require assistance from us as a society and as a province to ensure that, although they can't forget the experience they've had, they learn to deal with it, they learn to recognize that the adults who destroyed their childhood are not typical representatives of our society but are aberrations, and allow them to be able to move on and contribute positively to society and, more important, to be satisfied within themselves that they were victims, they were not doing something wrong, they were in a lifestyle that was introduced to them.

I'm pleased to support this bill to facilitate moving children into places of protection.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I'm pleased to be able to speak to this bill today and to congratulate Mr Bartolucci for being so persistent in bringing this bill back before us, because I believe all members of the House support the intention of this bill and want it to move forward. The last two attempts, as Mr Bartolucci outlined, failed. As we know, that often happens in the House with private members' bills. Sometimes people give up and sometimes people are persistent in bringing back these very important bills that we would like to see the government move on. But sometimes private members, when they're really committed to a cause and are persistent and keep bringing the issue back before us, succeed. Hopefully, today, Mr Bartolucci, this will be your day that we will pass the bill and it will move forward, and the government will step in and do

the things that need to be done to make it happen. Obviously, some resources would be involved and I hope very much, particularly after a budget that is balanced and a tax cut given—\$8 billion, over \$5 billion of it to corporations and very wealthy people—that the government can find within the dollars, lots of dollars, that are coming in in revenue these days, the money and resources to put into this very important project.

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I guess we all cringe when we think about child prostitution, because for those of us with children and for those of us who don't have children, just to even think about it is so heartbreaking and almost unbearable to contemplate. When I was Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, one of the things I was responsible for was the Ontario Film Review Board. So much of what the board had to do was to review pornographic movies. They are legal but there are certain guidelines they have to follow, and one of the guidelines of course, the top one, is to look out for child pornography, or even anybody pretending to be a child in such a film.

I also dealt very extensively with Bob Matthews, whom many of you may have heard of. He's a hero. For years and years he's been heading up a project to go after—I believe somebody already called them the scumbags; I wouldn't normally use that word in this House but I think we would all agree here that it's appropriate—scumbags who exploit little children, young children, in the most despicable ways for profit.

I admired Bob Matthews's work so much and was quite concerned that we do everything we could as a government to support that cause, and I was on a tour of the building where their offices were. I saw some pictures, just very tiny snapshots, literally and figuratively, of what they were dealing with. I can't get the images out of my mind, the young children in these pictures. It's just unspeakable what was being done to them. Some of them looked as young as six, seven, nine years old. The look in their eyes was just unforgettable. After seeing that, I certainly would support anybody in any measure that they want to take to do everything we can as a government and as a society to eliminate child pornography and child prostitution.

Having said that—and I am supporting the bill and so is my caucus—I know that Marion Boyd spoke to the bill before and we expressed some concerns, not about the intent, and I believe there are a few changes made in the legislation to reflect some of the concerns that have been raised in the past. Some of those are still concerns and I believe those are concerns we can deal with and should deal with, but they need to be pointed out again.

I know that Ms Boyd, back in 1998, expressed concern with respect to the apprehension of a child without a warrant. Although the wording does seem to provide protection to police officers in that they can do that if a "child's life or safety is seriously and imminently endangered," it goes on after that to place some pretty onerous requirements on child protection workers to follow up after the police. So throughout we have been

concerned and are concerned with that enormous onus on the child protection worker to show cause why the confinement was necessary.

We also expressed concerns, and I will again today, that the legislation might conflict with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That's something we always have to look at to make sure that when we move forward with this kind of legislation, it won't be thrown out because of that. In particular, the concern is in regard to the confinement without a warrant of persons who may or may not have been involved in a criminal offence. Section 9 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms indicates that "everyone has the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned."

Having raised those concerns again, we did then and still do support the intent of the legislation and many aspects of the legislation.

I would say that this is a good opportunity to discuss as well the issue around the government providing an opportunity, as we discuss these issues, to establish programs that are necessary to assist children in ending their involvement in prostitution and also to designate protective safe houses under the act.

I think that is incredibly important, and I think it's incredibly important to talk about the support systems that are in place to help children even before they go down that road, to help families cope with difficulties within their families, to have enough counsellors and social workers in the schools, to have enough licensed child care centres, to invest in early years programs, to make sure that we have programs to help those children when they are apprehended. We have to think about: What happens to them when they are finally released from that custody? What kinds of programs are out there? What kind of education opportunities, work opportunities, support systems are there for them, and in many cases their families, to help them cope with the problems that may have led the children there in the first place?

We very much support the intention of this legislation to find a way of intervening and apprehending the abused, and the welfare of children, but we also continue to have some concerns about certain sections, and we would look forward now to having the opportunity to propose some amendments.

We also welcome the opportunity the legislation presents to reflect on the pathetic underfunding of family and children's services. The government can get up and brag all they want about services they've put in place, but the reality is—and we cannot avoid talking about this, I would say to the members of the Tory government who are here today—we need to look very closely at where the cuts have been made and the kind of impact that is having on the supports that are so important to the children of our society.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Niagara Falls is not in his seat.

Ms Churley: The government members don't like to hear this, but we cannot talk about this legislation today

without talking about the proper supports being in place. For instance, the budget that just came out was a complete blow to child advocates. There was not one penny in that budget for early childhood years or to help poor families who need assistance.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Niagara Falls knows that he must be in his seat if he's to say anything. The next time, I will have to name him.

Ms Churley: Some of the government members are getting agitated here. I would say again that we cannot have this kind of discussion today without talking about resources. It's all very well to put a law in place that we agree with in principle and have nice chats about it here in the Legislature, and then not have a commitment to have the proper resources put in place. You can apprehend a child, but if the supports are not there to help that child afterwards, then that becomes a problem.

I say with the greatest respect that we should get away from the rhetoric and look at where there are holes in the system, where cuts have been made that are actually making it harder for families, particularly poor families, to get by and to get the help they need when they need it.

Despite the claims to the contrary, the government isn't spending a penny on early childhood, the early years. The \$30 million the government announced is a re-announcement of an old idea, and they're not even going to spend that \$30 million this year; they're waiting until the early years task group reports back in May of next year. I raise this because when we're talking about the protection of children, I think we in this place would agree, all of us, that early years intervention, early years development and education have been proven without a shadow of a doubt to be very important for the development of children later on in life. If you have good programs in place—good licensed child care, good early years programs—that can have a profound impact on the nature and the character of that child and that child's ability to learn and grow and flourish. That is absolutely necessary.

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I would suggest to the government today, when we talk about this issue, that we also talk about and think about the supports that need to be put in place.

I heard the member from the Tory caucus speak earlier about all the things the government has done. I presume that if the government uses this opportunity to talk about and brag about the things they feel good about, then I should have the opportunity to talk about the areas where I believe there are gaps and problems, where the cuts have hurt, where we have to invest more and where I saw holes and gaps in previous governments, including my own. What's unfortunate is that some of those holes and gaps have been widened under the watch of this government, so we do need to have that kind of discussion.

It's a fact that there are fewer police per capita on the street now, for instance, than when the NDP was in government, yet the government continues to brag about its law-and-order regime and agenda. At the same time,

we know that our police are still grossly underfunded. There are still, to this day, despite what they say, 818 fewer police per person on our streets than there were in 1995. That's a fact.

It is a fact that children's mental health has been severely underfunded and has been cut, and the waiting lists for children who are in dire need of help and support—and their families need that support—are just off the page. Thousands are having to wait. That does not bode well for the future of those children if they can't get the supports and the help they need when they're young and troubled and need some kind of intervention.

I support the legislation before us today and again congratulate the member for bringing it forward. I hope very much that the government will vote along with the Liberals and the NDP, as I believe they will, in support of this bill. Also, as they discuss it with the minister responsible, I hope they will look at where there are gaps in the system and talk about the kinds of resources that would be needed to make the act work, if passed, because an act passed without the resources to make it work is not worth the paper it's written on. It's nice to have it on the books but it won't really protect those children.

I don't believe a large amount of resources would be needed up front. Considering the revenues that we're enjoying these days, surely the government would be able to find the revenues and make this bill effective. It could go a long way in protecting those children who are being abused by some of the worst scumbags in our society. I would say that I'm very pleased about the fine and the jail sentence, because they're the ones we need to go after. I would even like to see that higher.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):

I'm very pleased to join in the debate on Bill 6 with respect to child prostitution. Certainly our government is committed to protecting vulnerable children. Let's be clear: We are willing to listen to any meaningful ideas about how to address the issue of child prostitution.

I'm certain everyone in this House is disturbed by the knowledge that children in this province are being used and manipulated by drug dealers and pimps. I'm confident that everyone would agree that if there are good ideas about how we as a government and as a society can help free these children from the clutches of people like this, we should look at them.

On the surface, the spirit of this bill seems to be in the right place and I'm comfortable saying that I think a more careful examination in committee will certainly be worthwhile. The focus of that examination may, in part, involve this, because in Alberta they do have legislation, but there are some subtle differences between the Alberta legislation and Bill 6 with respect to the apprehension of the child, as to who does that, and confinement.

In Bill 6, on the basis of a warrant or a court order, the police officer would be able to forcibly enter a premises to search for a child and, if necessary, apprehend the child and take the child to his or her parents etc. In Alberta the apprehension is on the basis of a warrant or a court order, a police officer or a child protection worker.

That's the subtle difference between Bill 6 and Alberta's legislation with respect to the apprehension on a warrant or a court order.

Where there is no warrant or court order, a police officer, under Bill 6, would be able to forcibly search a premises and apprehend a child, whereas in Alberta, without a warrant or court order, a police officer or child protection worker would be able to forcibly search a premises, apprehend a child and convey the child to a protective safe house if he or she has reason to believe the life or safety of the child in need of protection is seriously and imminently endangered. The difference is, with or without warrant, under Bill 6 it's the police officer who apprehends; under the Alberta law, it's broader: the police officer or child protection worker.

With respect to detention, under Bill 6 a child may be detained in a protective safe house for three days, during which time the child protection worker may return the child to a parent or guardian, release the child if he or she can provide for self, or apply for a supervision or wardship order. Under the Alberta legislation, a child may be detained in a protective safe house for three days, during which time the child protection worker must either return the child to a parent or guardian, release the child if he or she is 16 years or older and can provide for self, or apply for a supervision or guardianship order. So there is an age distinction with respect to detention between Alberta and Ontario. Also, under Bill 6 a child protection worker could continue to confine a child to a protective safe house pending the outcome of a hearing for a supervision or wardship order, so it's subject to the process, whereas in Alberta there is no explicit authority to continue to confine a child in a protective safe house beyond three days.

Those are issues where there is a difference between Alberta and Ontario, and obviously the member will have to explain why he chose to draft it the way he did. A committee could also look at it and say whether what's being proposed under Bill 6 has more merit than what's being done in Alberta, and take a look at the history out there. I think that's something important that we should be looking at.

With respect to the preamble of the bill, certainly no one would question that. "The people of Ontario believe that, (a) the safety, security and well-being of children and families is of paramount concern for all residents of Ontario" certainly goes without saying.

In closing, because my time is limited, I just want to comment on some of the statements in terms of funding that were mentioned by the member for Broadview-Greenwood. It's my understanding that the funding for children's protective services has increased by 80% since 1995 and that the funding formula is based on caseloads. In other words, if the caseload increases, the funding automatically increases. I think this government has put together an approach that is in the best interests of the child and his or her protection.

1140

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I am pleased to join this debate, pleased to support the Bartolucci bill, but I

am in very good company. It would appear that the Bartolucci bill has been endorsed by everybody from Mother Teresa to Chief Fantino, and it is my great pleasure to say that this bill has been endorsed by over 30 police organizations, that this bill has been endorsed by victims' groups, by community leaders and by everybody who understands the scourge of child prostitution and its effect on our society and on our province. My city, Toronto, is the place of origin of 53% of the prostitutes in this country. This is an issue for my riding of St Paul's, and the people of St Paul's expect this Legislature to do something about this scourge. The Bartolucci bill does just that.

As the member for Sudbury pointed out, child prostitution is not as it is depicted in Hollywood. This is not Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman*. In fact, pimps control child prostitutes through battering, through drugs and through alcohol. Child prostitutes are victims of AIDS, of sexually transmitted diseases. They are prey for muggers, rapists and murderers. They have left our society, per se; they are not in it. They carry the stigma of being prostitutes. They carry the stigma of being outsiders.

Right now, the main response to it is the criminal justice system, and it's a punitive response. The Bartolucci bill is a way for our society and our province to reach out to these people who are being stigmatized and abused, and pull them back in. This is an opportunity for us as a society to literally rescue these people at the stage of them being children and pull them out of the hell they live in.

There may be some who question the constitutional status of this legislation, and we should always ensure that the legislation brought before this House meets with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and other constitutional obligations. That goes without saying. But I hope that that in no way gets in the way of us in this Legislature moving forward on this bill and passing it.

It has passed second reading before. What is important is that we see it come to fruition, that we see it happen. We all agree that it is a problem. We all agree that this is a solution, that this is a constructive response and a way to deal with it. The fact that there may be some charter issues is the case with just about any bill that affects the liberty of individuals. I hope that the principles of fundamental justice under the Charter of Rights will recognize that not only is the charter there to protect people's civil liberties against state intrusions, but it is also there to permit the state to reach out and rescue those who are in so desperate need of rescue.

For thousands of years prostitutes, child and otherwise, have been outcasts in our society and in our province. Many people will look and think, "Why did they make that choice?" But these children did not make any choice, at the very least. They made no choice at all. They were forced into this life through a history of abuse in their family or otherwise.

If there is a level of individual culpability, I can assure you that once they are brought back into our society through the Bartolucci bill, they'll be willing to accept

that. But here is an opportunity for us to support a bill that permits us to prevent the continued scourge of child prostitution, that can rescue these children from the horrible life they now are in. I'm very proud to sit on this side of the House with the member for Sudbury and support this bill.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I'm delighted to be able to stand up and debate this bill today. I'd like to compliment Rick Bartolucci, the member for Sudbury, for bringing forward this bill. I know he does it with a great deal of principle. He very strongly believes in protection for our children. He has, as well, an accompanying piece of legislation, Bill 32, which I know he would like to bring forward for second reading at some time as well.

But knowing his principle in this and his concern for the children, I would like to point out—I know he remembers this—that there was another piece of legislation which our government brought forward which dealt with safety of children. It was the Safe Streets Act. Mr Bartolucci, the member for Sudbury, mentioned that Julian Fantino supported Bill 6. Well, Julian Fantino, the chief of the Metro Toronto police force, also supported the Safe Streets Act. I would like to know how he justifies using Chief Fantino's support for Bill 6 when he would not accept Chief Fantino's support for the Safe Streets Act.

There is a factor that I think we might take into account here, and that is that the Liberals felt that they had to oppose the Safe Streets Act because they are Her Majesty's loyal opposition. I'm sure that is the only thing that entered into their minds, and Mr Bartolucci, the member for Sudbury, along with many other members of the opposition, felt that they were subjected to the whip of that party and that they must do the whip's bidding. I know the member for Sudbury did not speak against the Safe Streets Act, and I give him credit for that. However, he did not stand by his principles and vote for the Safe Streets Act. He actually came into this House and voted against the Safe Streets Act. I would like to say to the member for Sudbury that I know it went against your grain to do that but that you were whipped to do it. There is room on this side of the House for you at any time, because your principles are our principles in this respect.

Now, the NDP voted against the Safe Streets Act too, but we expect that of the NDP. We don't expect that of you.

I do want to say that this Bill 6 is a good piece of legislation. There are amendments that need to be made. There's one that I have concerns about, that the police or the safe house may "release the child if, in the opinion of the child protection worker, the child is capable of providing for the child's own needs and safety." Had the child been capable of providing for his or her own safety, I think he or she wouldn't have been taken off the streets by the police in the first place.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today with a great deal of pride in speaking to this bill and also a great deal of pride and respect for the member for Sudbury, contrary

to what we just heard, which very much disappoints me, that we've turned child prostitution into a political agenda. I say to the member opposite that I'm very disappointed, extremely disappointed, and I know that the people in his riding would be disappointed that he took an opportunity to do such a thing. With the fact that we have children who are being affected on a daily basis and as we very well speak, it's disappointing to know that someone would take an opportunity to turn this into some type of agenda other than to protect those kids.

I would say very clearly that there are some members opposite who did take the time to offer constructive criticism, who did take the opportunity to express very clearly that they will be supporting the bill and that they would probably be making some recommendations at a later date at committee. I want to thank them for that, and I respect you for that. Yes, sir. You got it, Joe.

I want to make sure that people understand what we're talking about. A survey of youth conducted in 1998 by an outreach service organization that deals with child prostitutes gave us this information: regarding the age when they were first left at home alone, 45% of those 16 and over who were left alone have left home; 51% from the ages of 11 to 15 left home; those who have a life experience at home of serious conflicts, 63%; physical abuse, 45%; sexual abuse, 38%; those involved in CAS backgrounds, 48%; and the one that bothers me the most, 41% of those prostitutes had their first experience, their first trick, at 10 to 15 years of age, and 56% at 16 to 20. What does this point to? This points to the adults in our society who have made it their business to take advantage of and abuse our children. Mr Bartolucci's bill takes a step towards that—that we want to correct the problem.

1150

This is not the opportunity, this is not the moment, this is not the time in our history in this Legislature to try to win political points at the expense of our children. We must not, we cannot, the public doesn't want us to score political points on children. What we want to do is take the right action. This is the right action. Make the amendments, make the recommendations and move on with it.

As I stated in this House yesterday and this morning, the private member's bill needs to take on new life. We have to remove as much of the political party line as possible and move on to the legislation that speaks to the right thing.

The honourable member Mr Hastings made comment this morning, and we made those comments. I want to tell him very clearly that it was not a political issue. We spoke to the private member's bill in a way for it to move on. I want to say that yesterday, the historic moment when a committee put forward a bill, all members of this House moved as quickly as possible because it was the right thing to do.

This is the right thing to do. Our children must be protected. As the NDP member pointed out, and I agree with her, we must put our money where our mouth is. We must make the statement in this province of Ontario—and I would say further, in the country of Canada—that

we will not tolerate the abuse of our children in any way, shape or form. I would say to you that we must not politicize it. We must make it a priority. We must make the statement in law and in process and in finance that our children must be safe.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Sudbury has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bartolucci: I would like to thank all the members of the House who took part in the debate. Certainly it was a very controlled and meaningful debate, from my perspective, and I thank you for it.

In conclusion, I would like to read from a letter that Dr Fred Mathews, who works with the Central Toronto Youth Services, wrote in support of my Bill 32, which Mr Wettlaufer referred to. He says:

"I have spent my professional life as a psychologist and social scientist advocating for the needs of high-risk youth. Young people on the street are an especially vulnerable group. They are subject to all types of hardship and violence. They are often preyed upon by unscrupulous adults who exploit these desperate young people's need to survive...."

"I wholeheartedly support and endorse any and all actions that will help protect these young people and hold their abusers accountable. I believe it is up to us as a society, in the name of justice, to use any and every legal means at our disposal to protect vulnerable children and youth."

And so, my fellow parliamentarians, if you believe that children engaged in prostitution are victims of sexual abuse and require protection, and if you agree that it is the duty of the province to assist families and communities in providing that protection, and if you believe it is important for us to ensure, with unanimity, that the message to those poor, vulnerable children is loud and clear: "There is an avenue for you to explore in order to change your lifestyle and your life.—If you believe, I ask you to support this legislation.

E-COMMERCE ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE COMMERCE ÉLECTRONIQUE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item 23.

Mr Hastings has moved second reading of Bill 70, An Act with respect to Electronic Information, Documents and Payments. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to the standing orders, this bill will be referred to the committee of the whole House.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I'd like to refer Bill 70 to the standing committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker: Shall this bill be referred to the standing committee on general government? Agreed.

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN INVOLVED
IN PROSTITUTION ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES ENFANTS QUI SE LIVRENT
À LA PROSTITUTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We'll now deal with ballot item 24.

Mr Bartolucci has moved second reading of Bill 6, An Act to protect Children involved in Prostitution. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? The motion is carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, the bill is referred to the committee of the whole House.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'd like this to be referred to the committee on general government as well.

The Acting Speaker: Shall this bill be referred to the standing committee on general government? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' business having now been completed, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1330.

MEMBER'S STATEMENTS

HIGHWAY NOISE BARRIERS

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I'd like to bring up a concern that my constituents in Don Valley East, particularly in the Henry Farm community, have with the Minister of Transportation, Mr Turnbull, in his refusal to act upon the request for a much-needed sound barrier at Havenbrook Park.

The residents of Henry Farm have been subject to living with unacceptably high noise levels for far too long. Residents have repeatedly made requests to the minister to rectify the situation, and to this date absolutely nothing has come of it. The minister himself has admitted to me personally that the noise levels are well over the prescribed limits, and yet he continues to force the residents of the Henry Farm community to suffer under excessive noise pollution on a daily basis.

A simple solution can be sought. Extending the existing barrier will greatly reduce the noise emanating from the busy Highway 401, and yet the minister has refused to act because in his opinion the reduction is not enough to bring the noise down to acceptable levels. Instead he has chosen to let the members of the community have their voices drowned out by unacceptably high noise levels.

The minister claims it is too expensive and a waste of taxpayer's dollars. However, the taxpayers of Henry Farm disagree and see far greater waste in irresponsible government spending by Mike Harris and his government. The noise barrier would bring great relief to this community, and it is in dire need. I refuse to let the Henry Farm residents be drowned out by Minister

Turnbull and demand that the minister act to bring peace and quiet to this much-deserving community.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Next week is the 30th National Police Week. This is a week set aside to recognize the contributions of the brave and dedicated women and men who serve in law enforcement across this province.

This is an important week for the people of Ontario to get to know their local police officers. Community policing depends on a strong familiarity between civilians and the police officers who patrol our streets, and this week will provide Ontarians with a splendid opportunity to cement that relationship.

This year's Police Week will be especially poignant, with our new memorial to the 200 officers who gave their lives in the line of duty. The memorial stands right across the street from this Legislature. Do you know why? It is there to remind us that the laws we make as legislators will ultimately have to be enforced by our brave police women and men, sometimes at the ultimate cost of their lives.

I would like to take this opportunity to salute Chief Noel Catney and the women and men of the Peel Regional Police Service. Chief Catney has worked hard to make Peel Region one of the safest places in Ontario to work, live and raise our families. Through the chief's leadership, Peel police officers and members of my constituency have built a very positive relationship based on co-operation and trust.

I hope all members present will join with me in saluting all the members of the Peel Regional Police Service and all police forces across Ontario. I wish all our police officers a fantastic Police Week, and I am pleased to note that as the memorial to the fallen officers states, these women and men are indeed "Heroes in Life" to millions of Ontarians every day.

SULPHUR IN GASOLINE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): With the Environment Ministry battered by yet another round of cuts in its budget, Ontario Environment Minister Dan Newman has made a desperate attempt to divert attention from the damage caused by the slashing of his budget.

The Minister, astonishingly, as environmental insiders would observe, is now desperately calling upon the federal government to do what the Harris government already has the power to do itself: move quickly to reduce the sulphur content of gasoline.

Everyone will recall that it was the Harris government that stood shoulder to shoulder with the big oil companies in trying to thwart attempts by the federal government to pass a regulation to require the oil giants to produce gas with an average sulphur content no greater than 30 parts per million.

With smog alerts already warning residents of Ontario's polluted air, and criticism of the Harris cuts of one third of the environment ministry staff and almost 40% of the budget ringing in their ears, the Harris Tories, full of newly acquired bluster are once again pointing the finger of blame elsewhere.

The government of British Columbia regulates the sulphur content of gas sold in its province. For years, Ontario has regulated volatile organic compounds in Ontario gas. If the Harris regime has genuinely reversed its previous pro-pollution position on sulphur in gas, I call upon the minister not to pass the buck, but to introduce a regulation requiring that by January 1, 2002, all gas sold in Ontario must have, on average, a sulphur content of no more than 30 parts per million. Your bluff, Minister, has been called.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise today in honour of the Ontario Special Olympics, which are being held in York region, starting today, May 11, and ending May 14. I have the privilege of attending the opening ceremonies this evening at the York region administration building.

York region is incredibly fortunate to have been given the opportunity to host these games. I have also been given the honour of being a presenter for the medal winners. With over 900 athletes and coaches, 1,500 volunteers and hundreds of sponsors, this weekend's games are sure to be a success for all participants.

Special Olympics provide athletes who have a mental disability with the opportunity to experience and succeed in sport. Special Olympians gain self-confidence and transfer their success from the playing field to other aspects of their lives.

The five provincial championship sport competitions are: five-pin bowling, which will be taking place at Stellar Lanes in Newmarket; 10-pin bowling, which will be taking place at Club 300 in Markham; powerlifting, at St Andrew's College in Aurora; swimming, at the Richvale pool in Richmond Hill; and floor hockey, at the Williams complex in Vaughan.

Events such as the Special Olympics would not be possible without the hundreds of volunteers and sponsors, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them. I would also like to congratulate all the participants in the games and to wish them the best of luck in their events.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I rise today to request that the Minister of Health order her ministry officials to implement the Ontario Review Board's decision of November 8, 1999, to have a forensics patient moved from the St Thomas psychiatric hospital to Whitby mental health centre.

This issue is surrounded by tragic circumstances. Brian Crocker, a father and husband, was shot three times

at point-blank range at his home in December 1995. Through unbelievable odds, Mr Crocker fought to survive. This is not the only fight Mr Crocker has had. The Crockers were left out of previous review board hearings that allowed the patient to be transferred from Penetanguishene to St Thomas psychiatric hospital, less than five kilometres from Mr Crocker's home. The review board assessed these circumstances and agreed that the patient should be relocated because he posed a direct threat to Mr Crocker.

Mr Crocker is in fear of his life. The administrator of the psych hospital claims he does not know why the order has not been carried out. Is our mental health system in such disarray and so underfunded that the quality of life and safety of victims have to be jeopardized? Is this government concerned at all about victims' rights? The last line of the review board's judgment commands the psychiatric hospital, by order of Her Majesty, to execute the terms of the disposition. Mr Crocker and his family have waited five long months for the transfer and demand that this issue be resolved now, Minister of Health.

I am providing the minister with a package that will give her all the information that will apprise her fully of this situation so that she can move on this issue immediately.

MOTHER'S DAY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mother's Day on May 7, 1982, will be remembered as the saddest day of my life. As everyone knows, this coming Sunday, May 14, is Mother's Day. While we have selected one day out of 365 to celebrate the contributions made by our mothers, the sentiments of this day really should be applied every day of our lives. Mothers are our teachers, our healers, our caregivers, our friends and our advisers. The contributions made by mothers make our society and the work we do important; they are immeasurable.

The origins of Mother's Day stretch back to the Greeks and Romans and to the Middle Ages, but the events we know today were originated in the United States by Anna Jarvis in the early 1900s. Ironically, Anna never became a mother herself. She began a letter-writing campaign shortly after her mother's death in 1905. Miss Jarvis believed that oftentimes children did not appreciate their mothers enough, and hoped that a Mother's Day would increase respect and strengthen the family bond. Over the next few years, Mother's Day was celebrated across Canada and many other countries.

This Sunday, I encourage all families to share with one another, respect their parents, buy them flowers, take them out for dinner and enjoy the day.

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EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): The crisis in hospital emergency rooms is happening again. In

fact, it's happening still. Tuesday afternoon, only two of Toronto's 25 emergency rooms were taking new patients. All the rest were on redirect or critical care bypass. There was no flu outbreak to blame it on this time, just a one-day heat wave.

It was a year ago that the Minister of Health assured the people of this province that she had fixed the emergency room problems once and for all. But not so. During the fall months and into December we had an emergency room crisis of unprecedented proportions. There were more emergency rooms on critical care bypass and redirect than ever before in Ontario's history, and this was true right across the province.

In December, the Minister of Health announced that she had a plan to relieve the crisis in Toronto, at least, but the Band-Aid isn't holding. Emergency rooms are still overcrowded and hospitals are stretched beyond their limits. They have no flexibility even to deal with a one-day heat wave. This was never just a flu season fluke and the situation is going to get worse, not better. The government has not put enough money into the budget to meet even existing hospital costs, let alone open up beds that have been closed because of past cuts.

So now emergency rooms are being closed sooner than planned so that hospitals can balance their budgets, as the minister has ordered. The emergency rooms at Branson and Women's College are both to close sooner than planned so that North York and Sunnybrook can balance their budgets. I understand that the Wellesley emergency will now close on October 1. The crisis we saw again this week will grow larger and larger as the summer days get hotter.

SAULT STE MARIE TEEN CENTRE

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I rise today to share with this House and the province, and in particular my own community, those who don't already know, the wonderful work that is going on under the guise of the Sault Ste Marie Teen Centre.

It's an operation that has come to fruition over a long period of time, with effort put in by literally hundreds of people, volunteers, to see that there would be some place in Sault Ste Marie that teenagers, young people, could go, on a weekend particularly but also during the week, for various activities—cultural, educational and recreational—that were safe and positive re some opportunity for young people to explore relationships, build on some of the giftedness that's there already and, in that, to permeate the rest of the community with positive experiences and view and effort on behalf of young people and those who work with them.

They have identified and have been living in a home now, the old Sault Collegiate building on top of the hill. Those who know Sault Ste Marie will know of that as a very historic building, a school that has a long history in Sault Ste Marie that's very positive. The teen centre has claimed that as their own. They are struggling at the moment around the question of financing and how they

will continue that. They are appealing to the Algoma District School Board and the municipal council to continue to support them, and I encourage them to do the same.

YORK REGION ECONOMY

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): I'm honoured to rise today as the representative for the riding of Thornhill as well as a resident of York region. York region is in the midst of a period of tremendous growth. In fact, according to the community newspaper which serves the riding of Thornhill, the region currently "boasts the biggest residential construction boom in all of Canada, while maintaining the lowest level of unemployment in the entire greater Toronto area at just 4.1%. Almost 34,000 homes were either completed or started in 1999." Condominium development has increased throughout York region and a number of construction companies and their related suppliers report tremendous growth. This is a true testament to York region's strong economy and popularity for both business and the residents of the region.

York region's economy will only continue to get stronger. According to the same community newspaper: "There are 20 companies in the region which employ more than 500 workers. These jobs are not low-level, minimum wage jobs, either. York region offers the high-paying, high-technology jobs" that are required in today's global marketplace and that this Ontario government is proud to continue to promote.

Residential, commercial and industrial growth strongly suggest that York region, including my riding of Thornhill, will continue to be a great place to start a business, to work, to live and to raise a family.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin with reports by committees, we have with us today in the members' east gallery Mr Brian Pallister, who is a former cabinet minister in the Manitoba Legislature. Will all members join in welcoming him.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker I have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding sittings of the justice and social policy committee.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move, notwithstanding the order of the House dated May 1, 2000, that the standing

committee on justice and social policy be authorized to meet for an additional two hours during the morning of Monday, May 15, 2000, to consider Bill 62, the Direct Democracy through Municipal Referendums Act, 2000; and

That the committee be authorized to meet for four days between May 17 and May 26, 2000, inclusively, for the consideration of Bill 69, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 in relation to the construction industry.

The Speaker: All those in favour? Agreed.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EDUCATION REFORM

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): As you know, over the past five years the Ontario government has been working to improve the quality of education across the province.

Our goal is quite simple: better quality and more accountability. We are systematically working our way through the commitments we made to voters about how we would achieve these improvements. From more money in the classroom to a more rigorous curriculum, from more parental involvement to standardized testing, we are increasing quality and accountability standards in our schools.

This morning I announced another step in our plan for quality education, a step we told voters we would take, a step that will create a comprehensive teacher-testing program to raise the quality of teaching in Ontario, a step that will raise the quality of the education our students receive.

Every parent knows how important a teacher can be to his or her child's future. They know what a difference a teacher can make from year to year. Ontario has many excellent teachers in our classrooms who do make that difference, teachers who know their subject matter inside out, who have a range of teaching strategies that effectively communicate that information and the skills to inspire learning. That excellence should be recognized.

But every parent also knows that there are teachers who are not meeting these standards, teachers who have not worked to upgrade and update their skills and knowledge.

The system does not help. There are no consistent, province-wide standards for what a teacher should do to stay as up to date as possible; for the procedures boards and principals should use to evaluate teachers; for the support that new teachers need; for the procedures for dealing with an incompetent teacher. Equally important, there is no formal role for parents in the assessment of teachers.

We have looked at the best of what other professions and jurisdictions are doing to address this challenge. We

have listened carefully to what our education partners have advised.

The announcement I made this morning, the implementation framework for our new Ontario teacher testing program, is a made-in-Ontario approach that deals with all of these challenges. It sets new standards, new expectations and strikes a fair and reasonable balance between the assessment of knowledge and critical classroom skills. It will provide parents and students the assurance that teachers are as up to date as possible and doing the best job possible.

This far-reaching initiative, which will deal with new teachers entering the profession as well as established teachers, builds on the reforms already in place to improve student achievement and it responds to the concerns we've been hearing from parents and students. It will ensure that Ontario's students will receive the best possible education.

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This program has three key elements.

First, beginning next fall, all established teachers will have to be recertified every five years to ensure that they are as up to date in their knowledge and skills as possible. To be recertified, teachers will have to successfully complete a number of required courses, including written tests and/or other assessments, to do this. Many teachers, as we know, already undertake certain professional development activities or take extra courses that will allow them to teach additional grades and subjects, and these activities can also count towards recertification.

Second, in 2001, all new teachers will have to pass a qualifying test before they receive their certification to teach in Ontario. This will ensure that they have the knowledge and the skills required to enter our classrooms. We will also be designing an induction program, similar to an internship, that will help new teachers develop good classroom management and teaching skills through coaching and support from more experienced colleagues. Again, as we all know, many experienced teachers already provide this support, but much more needs to be done to make sure that those teachers get that good start in those crucial early years.

Third, by next fall we will establish new province-wide standards to ensure that all teachers are evaluated by boards and principals in the same consistent way across the province. This will include a role for parents. Standards will include strategies to ensure that low-performing teachers are given the time, supports and the opportunities needed to improve. But these strategies will also include a new review process to determine if teachers who are not meeting the standards should have their certification removed.

In addition, effective this June, we will require that all teachers new to Ontario who were trained in a language other than English or French must pass an oral and written language test in either of these languages before entering the teaching profession in Ontario.

Quality teaching is also about excellence and accountability. That is why we will be looking at ways to do quality assurance through a third-party process that includes parents, educators and experts, and respond to the recommendations of the Education Improvement Commission.

Finally, because we believe that excellence deserves recognition, we want to develop a system that does indeed recognize that teaching excellence. We will continue to work with all of our education partners to further design and implement these very important initiatives.

Teachers are not alone in facing the challenges to make all of their members as good as they can be. Whether it is the health, legal, engineering, accounting or other professions, they all have a variety of entry requirements, standards for professional development, ongoing assessment, accountability practices, and many are working to improve these strategies. Working with our education partners to implement this program will bring the teaching profession into line with what's happening in other countries and in other professions. This is an important step because it clearly recognizes that one of the foundations of quality education is quality teaching. It will help ensure that our students get the best education possible, and that is a win for everyone.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is passing strange that the minister would stand in this House two days in a row to announce how badly their education reforms are going, to show us again a government with an utter lack of direction when it comes to education. Minister, we have here, as you know, the cabinet submission on teacher testing. This document should be copied for all the teachers in the province so they can see just how political a ploy this minister is taking today, how little this is based on any reference to what's good for children, how instead this is a government looking to undermine—and the minister used the word “systematically.” The only thing that's systematic about this government's approach to education is undermining the professionalism of teachers every chance they can.

Nowhere in this document is to be found a teacher test. There is no document here that says whether people are teachers. Instead, during the election the government gave the electorate the impression that all teachers will be required to participate in testing programs. They talked about recertification examinations. They said they would do that. But what was it but a crass political ploy to attack teachers and try to gain some votes? A year later the minister still can't produce a test. Instead we have an immense mass of duplication. We have a language proficiency test which duplicates one that already exists. We have exit exams for new teachers that duplicate what is already in the colleges.

We wholeheartedly agree that there should be accountability. What we don't think is that it should be a political process controlled by this government. Instead, we challenge this government to treat teachers with the

respect they deserve, and allow teachers to regulate their professional behaviour through their college. But for some specific reason this government refuses to accord respect to our teachers. Then this government has the audacity to dwell on the shortcomings of some teachers when their shortcomings in education are so manifest and they want us to support a policy that is based on their misperceptions of what the system should be. Even at this late date, in an era where they've imposed all manner of changes on the quality of the teaching experience, they won't extend respect to teachers.

What is in this document is very instructive. What is in this document are conference calls with people in Tennessee. What is in this document is quality assurance teams that will be based on private sector input. What is based in this minister's mind, and I guess this government's direction, is the view of a school as a factory. This is the view of a school as producing widgets, to be done at the lowest cost and with the least amount of care and professionalism. That is the only consistent thread in what the minister is announcing today.

We could write this off as just another failed political promise, another thing where this government didn't know what they were doing. As Bill Davis said, when he looked down his glasses at the minister at the OISE awards of excellence—by the way, another duplication. The government will bring in its own awards of excellence. I guess they didn't like the Bill Davis award. But Bill Davis said to this minister, “Don't do a written test.” Today we find out that basically there really isn't an overall written test, because that's not possible; the government's position was untenable in the first place.

What we also find out in this big hullabaloo about teacher testing is that there won't be any examinations or in fact anything in this program for two years for experienced teachers. We find out that in June we can expect a photo op with some kind of demonstration test. What we don't find from this minister and from this government is any sincere interest in getting to the bottom of how to support teachers better and how to give kids in the classroom a better learning experience. If there were, there wouldn't be this obsession with centralized bureaucracy. Fifteen million dollars, which I guess all these members are supporting, for a new centralized bureaucracy, on top of \$53 million—new spending for the bureaucracy, taken away from the kids. Some \$1.6 billion has been taken away and nothing put back except more bureaucracy. That's not even a good version of the private sector.

We want to advise this minister that our view is to treat teachers with respect. The fact that you can't bring yourself to that today means that you shouldn't get any for this proposal.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I can see how the Minister of Education just relishes making fun of the opposition, and she'll continue to do that. I'm going to keep an eye on her as she does this.

Madame Ecker, I have a movie to recommend to you. I recently saw *The Gladiator*. Perhaps you haven't seen it

yet, but I recommend it to you. In this movie there is a well-known figure, Caesar, who of course knows the Romans are hungry for bread. But in order to satisfy another hunger—not for bread but the thirst for blood—he opens up the Colosseum again and opens up the games, so that the slaves could go into the Colosseum and die as man with honour. You would like that movie, Madame Ecker. It's right up your alley.

To move to another political figure I'm sure you know, Machiavelli, a countryman of mine—mind you that was 500 years ago or so—but I suspect you understand Machiavelli more than most of us. You guys are good. I don't think I need to explain who he is, because you know him well, and you are the best Machiavellians I have ever seen in my 10 years in this place. You are good, Madame Ecker. You're good. Not just you—all of you are good. You're among the best I've seen.

1400

Take Bill 160. Bill 160 was designed to squeeze money. Madame Ecker and the others say, "No, no, the reason we're controlling education is so we could give more money." She laughs and scoffs at the opposition when we say they've taken money out. She laughs and says: "Ha, ha, that's not true at all. We've given more money. Check your facts." You're good.

They divide classroom and non-classroom funding. "Classroom funding," she says, "has been increased. Non-classroom funding, which includes secretaries, heating, principals, vice-principals, caretakers—these people don't matter." So you take money out of that pot called non-classroom education, Monsieur Sampson, and then you say: "Ah, but we're increasing classroom funding. It's OK if we take it from some other source because they're not teachers and it's not part of the classroom. Therefore, we haven't decreased funding, have we?" It's very clever. It's Machiavellian, as you can see. "School closures are irrelevant. They had to be done, but we didn't do it as a government. The boards did it. Go after the boards," says Madame Ecker.

You're destroying the educational system, Ecker, you are. Your constant cuts remove any hope of providing quality education on a daily basis. We hear of dirty classrooms, schools with fewer maintenance workers and secretaries, schools sharing principals. The list goes on. People are fundraising till they drop. People are fundraising to make up for the underfunding of the education system, yet you continue to deny we've got a problem.

Just a couple of months ago you said: "We don't have a problem with special ed. Oh, no, there's no problem with special ed." All of a sudden she announces \$40 million. In the budget they announce \$100 million. To hear her say it, a couple of weeks ago, "We don't have a problem with special ed." Then magically \$140 million appears and, "We've solved the problem." But all along she denied that we had a problem. Poor teachers and poor victims and poor parents.

We had the code of conduct announced a couple of weeks ago. We had a code of behaviour in 1994, introduced by the New Democrats, a comprehensive docu-

ment that dealt well with discipline problems, including expulsion of students who commit serious problems in our school system. But that's not good enough. No, no, Madame Ecker has to introduce a code of behaviour, a code of conduct. Why? "Because it's going to be tougher than the previous one. So we disguise the previous code of behaviour and say, 'Not good, code of conduct better.'" You guys are good. Ecker, you are good.

Yesterday's announcements: "We make teachers teach longer. Why? Because the public believes teachers are underworked and overpaid. So what are we going to do? We're going to make them teach longer, save a couple of hundred million, put it back into the school system and say, 'We're putting up a couple of hundred million to make the education system better.'"

Today, it's teacher testing. "Oh, no, it's only Earl Manners who says teacher testing. This is not what it's about," she said today at the press conference. Yet the first line says, "To ensure Ontario students receive the highest quality education, teachers will be recertified every five years under the teacher testing program." That's what she wants the public to know, that teachers are incompetent and they're lazy, and that this minister and this government are going to fix that with a teacher testing program, which she denies is what is happening.

Minister, you are good. I can only hope that the parents and the teachers are well aware of what you're doing and will fight back, like in Nova Scotia.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. My question is about the ongoing Tory public land scandal involving millions and millions of dollars of taxpayers' money in the province of Ontario. A very simple question, Minister: Have you ever attended board meetings of the Ontario Realty Corp, either in person or by conference call, where landfills were being discussed?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): In direct answer, I think it's on the record. I've mentioned in this House before that from time to time I've gone to board meetings of the Ontario Realty Corp. I'm not there when they discuss actual properties or the day-to-day operations. They're accountable for that. But they do report to me. Like all other boards that report to me, occasionally I drop in to see how they're doing.

Mr Agostino: Now we know for the record: The minister has confirmed he does attend board meetings. All along the minister has claimed he knows nothing about what is happening. Clearly he knows a lot more about the deals than he's willing to admit to. He's blamed the ORC board on numerous occasions. It doesn't seem consistent with the facts that a minister attends the

meetings either in person or by conference call, as he has confirmed today in the House, but is not there and is always missing in action when these deals are being discussed. Clearly, we're not getting the whole story here.

Minister, I have another question. It's very simple. Has your office or you ever received or asked for briefings prior to land sales being finalized?

Hon Mr Hodgson: From time to time the member of the opposition comes in and waves around pieces of paper. His facts usually aren't accurate. He knows that members of caucus can request information on the dealings of the Ontario Realty Corp. He's requested two such briefings himself. He's rejected them, but they've set them up for him. Other members of your caucus have requested information and the ORC has been more than willing to give that.

Mr Agostino: The minister clearly didn't answer the question. Let's clarify one thing. I have never asked, nor do I believe any members of my caucus have asked, for briefings in regard to specific land deals. General ORC practices; never to specific land deals. I'd like to make that clear.

Second, we have now confirmed that you had 10 board meetings. We know that you and your office receive briefings on land sales prior to these deals going through. We know that ultimately you are responsible. You can't blame the board for these screw-ups, Minister. You can't blame the staff. There's got to be a point where ministerial accountability takes precedence and someone has to say, "I am responsible, I am in charge and I will take whatever action is necessary," including your resignation, "if the system has failed." And clearly the system has failed the taxpayers of Ontario.

Minister, we know you were there. We know you knew what was going on and you did nothing to stop these deals. You cannot continue to pass the buck. You're in charge. You're responsible for this mess at the ORC. Will you today do the responsible thing? Hand in your resignation and let's get to the bottom of this scandal.

Hon Mr Hodgson: First of all, let's review the facts. You're talking about allegations that haven't been proven. The responsible thing to do is to find out if there's any evidence, and if there's evidence, to have an investigation with qualified people.

The board reviewed past sales. They noticed some irregularities. They called in the auditors. The auditors asked for outside forensic accountants to help. They noticed that yes, there are some things here in past transactions that warrant an investigation. They called in the police. The police have determined that they will investigate it. That's the proper thing to do: to find the evidence, get to the bottom of it, get the facts, go through the due process.

I don't know what the Liberal policy is. If you want to be the judge and jury and just make accusations, and then all of a sudden you've damaged hundreds of people's reputations needlessly when the proper steps are being taken—I think that's what really bothers the Liberal

Party. They know that the proper course is to allow the police to conduct their investigation, to ask people who are qualified—forensic accountants—to review these past sales to determine whether the taxpayers are well served or not, and why not.

1410

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. Minister, I want to ask you about the failure of some of your education reforms, particularly about the failure in your own home riding of two boards three years ago to reach a settlement that would serve teachers, students and the system well. Three years ago they failed to reach that kind of agreement. An arbitrator forced on them a particular formula. Rather than trying to find a way to fix that problem in your own backyard, we find you now, three years later, taking that very same formula for the use of teacher time and foisting it on the whole province.

Minister, isn't it simply true that this is the government's attempt to try and bring chaos and difficulty to the whole province because that's what you've found in your home riding? The Durham formula brings us the Durham disease, this discontent between teachers, this impossibility of working out arrangements. I want you to think carefully because people in your own home riding are not happy with the arrangements of the last two years. But 70 out of 72 boards did reach arrangements that serve kids well. That many boards would have been doing that this fall if it hadn't been for your intervention. Minister, how do you explain yourself?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): First of all, there's no difficulty explaining myself because I have the facts, which the honourable member clearly does not appear to have. There are many boards that have agreements that talk about 6.5 out of 8. He might want to check his research on that. It is not fair to say that the only reason the Durham region students have been denied by the union their extracurricular and co-instructional activities for two years is because of 6.5, because other boards have agreements that lay that out.

Secondly, it is also not accurate for this member to say that somehow or other the regulations and the legislation we've put in place are some sort of Durham formula. They are not. As a matter of fact, what we have done is significantly enhance the funding for boards through lower class size in elementary grades, through lower class size in high schools—with \$263 million to back that up—through extra remediation for \$25 million, and teacher adviser time. All of those things are improving the ability of boards to have good quality agreements.

Mr Kennedy: I didn't actually hear any facts from the Minister, except affirming the fact that Durham is a central consideration here, that Durham is why the rest of the province is being inflicted. For example, the \$1.6 billion that this government and these members all agree should be less from their share in the education system,

that happens in Durham too. Durham, it turns out, is the second-lowest funded per capita per student board.

In your own backyard you're underfunding the needs of your kids. In the time you've been in your office, have you actually been able to buckle down and solve that problem? No. Instead, you're passing on the problems from that riding to the rest of the province. You're doing it in a way that even the Sudbury Star says, "Start over." They say your current course is provocative and unnecessary. They want you to sit down with the Durham boards and find a solution that doesn't inflict problems on the rest of the province. But I suspect that the reason you won't do that is because you want the money, the \$1.6 billion you've taken out, and the money that you don't give to Durham to deal with its growth and for their needs. Instead, you want to see something else happen in the education system.

But this is your chance, Minister. Will you stand up today, withdraw the formula that you know is not going to be in the interests of students around the province and deal with the Durham problem where it should be dealt with, in Durham?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Again, let me correct the record since the honourable member keeps confusing it. First of all, we did not take that money out of education. As a matter of fact, there is more there than there was when we came in. He knows that. He's been briefed on it and the documents prove it.

Secondly, the board in Durham region repeatedly tried to solve this problem for two years. Both of those boards even put more money on the table, and the union refused. I've had teachers in my office in tears because they were afraid to do extracurricular activities because of the union. We have had students who have had opportunities for access to post-secondary institutions and scholarships denied to them because teachers were afraid to participate. "This is not acceptable," parents said, and we agree.

The other thing I would like to say to the honourable member is, one of the reasons we changed the funding formula was that boards like Durham could catch up with the building they needed for new classrooms. The portables in my riding are there because of those governments when they were there.

Mr Kennedy: I'll tell you what's not acceptable: that the minister is spending no money on capital to claim that they're doing something about school kids in Durham. The school kids in Durham are not going to be helped by your measures of yesterday. That's what we found out canvassing principals and people involved in education in Durham. Their advice to you, Minister, is to go back to the drawing board. Their advice to you is to look at the reason why they receive the second-lowest per student funding—in your own riding, Minister. They, like the rest of the province, want you to acknowledge that you've taken \$1.6 billion out of your share of funding. You're very happy to go after the federal government for their share of the health funding, but your share of education funding is down by 29% from what it was before.

Minister, I guess we want to ask you clearly on behalf of not just the people in Durham but the people in Sudbury and the people around the province whom you want to inflict with problems that wouldn't have been there this fall, is it worth it, and are you really up to something else? As your cabinet document shows, you are prepared to involve the private sector in the training of teachers, in quality assurance teams, in coming up with evaluations. Minister, don't you just want to not have public education at all?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The hyperbole, the hysterics, the fear-mongering from across the way really do get a little tiresome.

I would like the House to note, though, that this is a red-letter day. The critic has finally admitted that the efforts of this health minister and the Durham MPPs have meant more money for health care in Durham region.

The other thing is, the honourable member is asking me to make funding decisions in this province based on personal politics, that somehow or other because it's my riding I'm supposed to give Durham more money. That's the old way of funding education. We fund education based on a fair and equitable formula.

On one hand they say, "Every board gets the same," and now he's saying, "Some boards get more and some boards get less?" Yes, they do, because some boards have higher needs than other boards, and that is the basis of this formula.

We have seen the biggest building boom in schools in our region that we've seen in decades. We're finally catching up to the lack of work that they did.

VICTIMS OF ASBESTOS EXPOSURE

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): My question is to the Acting Premier. Some years ago, as you know, Ontario government inspectors studying asbestos levels at the Holmes facilities in Sarnia found levels more than 8,000 times higher than today's standards. In fact, one ministry report called it the highest levels ever recorded.

In the 1950s and 1960s, despite having this information, the Ontario government issued no orders. Years went by without a single visit to the plant, and when they finally did issue orders they were not enforced. We know this from Ministry of Labour documents released through freedom of information.

The failure of those governments to act meant that many workers would die. They would die from exposure to asbestos that the government of Ontario knew could kill them and in many cases would kill members of their families and their neighbours through exposure to substances brought home on clothes and airborne in the community.

Minister, will your government, on behalf of Ontario governments of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, acknowledge its responsibility, and will it formally apologize to these workers, their families and their descendants for that inaction?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Mr Speaker, I know the Minister of Labour wants to answer this.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I appreciate the question from the member opposite. It's an issue that I think everyone takes very seriously and understands the ramifications and concerns involved.

We as a government, have taken this issue seriously. We've dealt with this very directly with those people involved in the lion's share of the cases, and Sarnia is a good example, and other regions around this province.

I met personally with them. I met personally to ensure that a centre is in fact opened and funded on an ongoing basis to deal with the issues surrounding this terrible situation. We have asked the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to maintain a constant flow of financial dollars to the region, and we have asked that doctors be seconded and brought in to deal with those affected by this terrible situation.

If you're asking me if we are prepared to say that we have some responsibility as a government through the 1960s and 1970s with respect to this, the answer obviously is yes. We are the government. It is our important role to protect people in workplaces.

Was the technology there in those days that is here today? I'm not so sure that we can just cast aside the situation and claim a special status today. But what I can say to you is, if it's an apology you're looking for, there is no shortage of that. Certainly we are sorry. Certainly we are tragically sorry about what happened, and I would expect nothing less from anyone in this House in expressing those concerns.

Mr Christopherson: Let me say to you, Minister, when you mention that you take this seriously, I want to draw to your attention that on Monday, December 3, 1998, my leader and I both raised this very issue here in this place. On that day, as today, victims, widows and surviving family members were in the gallery waiting to hear from the government, and they're here again waiting to hear from you. Minister, some members on the government benches that day, including some cabinet ministers, laughed at our question and laughed at this issue. Today we seek a much more appropriate response.

We want your government to apologize for that unforgivable behaviour on December 3, 1998, and we want you to put things right by the victims, by committing today to provide compensation for the widows and children who are now denied compensation. Will you commit today to bring in legislation that will provide compensation for the secondary victims of the exposure, which your predecessors failed to act on, that has led to the deaths of workers and their families?

1420

Hon Mr Stockwell: With respect to December 3, I myself cannot believe that anyone in this caucus or in the cabinet would laugh at such a question; maybe it was something else that was being discussed that day. I don't know anyone in this room who would consider someone suffering from this fatal disease a laughing matter. I don't

think that is acceptable, nor do I believe that to be the case. I know everyone in this caucus personally; I don't know one of them who would consider that a laughing matter, because they're respecting and caring individuals.

Second, we are dealing with the cost implications and the resulting measures that would have to be taken with respect to dealing with family members and so on, and in respect of carrying home the particular difficulties from the plant that may have infected other members of the family. We don't deny that, but there's a measure of responsibility in addressing the situation and discovering how best to deal with it, and we at the WSIB and the Ministry of Labour do not take those requests without the seriousness they deserve.

I was in Sarnia with the local member. I met with them too. I talked to them. I committed to funding the clinic. I committed to funding their need. I committed to going and giving an undertaking to them that we would review these situations. This isn't political. This is a situation that happened two decades ago. No one wanted this to happen. It's terrible it did happen. To suggest that people in this caucus would laugh about it I don't think is appropriate to this Legislature.

Mr Christopherson: Obviously I was in that House, and if you want to talk about inappropriate activity and behaviour, that's exactly what happened. What they were laughing about is up to them to decide, but they indeed were laughing when we raised this issue, and those widows were in the gallery.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Let me say that your heckling now shows the same level of respect today that you showed then. The fact of the matter is that we've got dead workers who ought not to have died, we have wives, husbands and children who have died who ought not to have died, and they're not receiving compensation.

Minister, the words aren't good enough. We need legislation. We need your commitment that those secondary victims are going to be compensated for their losses just as much as the workers who worked in the workplace, because those secondary victims died as a result of exposures in that workplace no differently than the workers who were there every day. We need your commitment that you'll bring in legislation to give those widows and their family members the compensation they're rightfully entitled to.

Hon Mr Stockwell: There has been a succession of governments in this province. Each and every person in this House has responsibility and concerns with this issue. We've all had a chance to deal with this. No one takes it any more seriously than any other. Because you belong to a certain party doesn't mean you've cornered the market on compassion. Compassion is also on this side of the House.

Mr Christopherson: Then commit to giving the money. Keep the word. Give us the money.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister waited quietly, as did the House, when the member asked a very difficult, very tough and very forceful question. I

would appreciate if the member would let the minister respond. Sorry for the interruption.

Hon Mr Stockwell: When we came to office, I came to this ministry and the first thing we did was increase the occupational exposure limits in this province so this kind of thing couldn't happen again. We had the chance to fix that, all of us. We went forward and fixed it. So if you're asking me today, will I continue to meet, am I prepared to make the commitment, are we going to investigate through medical evidence, use all advanced technology possible to ensure that the people are looked after in a proper, humane and acceptable way—

Mr Christopherson: What they want is the compensation, Chris.

The Speaker: Minister, take your seat. Unfortunately, I will have to warn the member; this is his last warning on this. I know it's an emotional issue. I know we have some friends in the gallery who want to hear the answer, and when you're shouting across at the minister they can't hear the answer as well. I know it's a very emotional issue, but we do need to hear the answer. Unfortunately, I have to give the member his last warning on this. If he shouts across again, unfortunately I will have to name him. I apologize again to the Minister of Labour. Sorry.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I've met with them. I plan on meeting again. I'm quite certain that in the future, with the technology, the medical evidence and the procedures we put in place, the amount of money we've committed to these areas, the openness of this government to meet with them and try and deal with the issue—yes, the apology, absolutely. In fact, members for Hamilton West and Beaches, I apologize not on behalf of this government; I apologize on behalf of the entire Legislature and the people of the province of Ontario. They will be helped, within the best abilities this government can use. We will be certain to ensure that they are in fact looked after as best as possible. At this time I can't continue—

Mr Christopherson: They need compensation. Words aren't going to do it.

The Speaker: I'm afraid, unfortunately, I have warned him plenty of times. I know it's an emotional issue, but I'm afraid I have no alternative but to name the member for Hamilton West, Mr Christopherson.

Mr Christopherson was escorted from the House.

Interruption.

The Speaker: We will have a 15-minute recess while they clear the galleries.

The House recessed from 1426 to 1442.

EDUCATION REFORM

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I believe we left off at a new question; the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. I mentioned Machiavelli earlier on in my statement, but I forgot Bismarck. You recall Bismarck. I know it's an odd reference for you, but Bismarck was the fellow who used

to create a crisis and solve it in order to stay in government. Does that sound somewhat familiar to you folks? I think that's what you people are doing.

When asked this morning at the press conference what evidence you had that the quality of teachers in Ontario is substandard, you have no evidence. When asked what other jurisdictions Ontario's been compared to, you were initially somewhat vague and then you threw in a couple of countries. When asked how many teachers in Ontario are inadequate, you have no answer at all. Minister, I want to suggest to you that this is what you're doing. You're trying to make the public believe that teachers in this province are lazy and incompetent and that you are fixing the problem. That, I suggest to you, is the real agenda, isn't it?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): Obviously, our new history curriculum is working, given the honourable member's references.

First of all, I'd like to say I'm not interested in running down the education system in Ontario. I'm not interested in sitting here and saying, "How bad are we?" That's not a helpful discussion. What I am interested in doing is moving forward with recommendations from all-party committees like the Royal Commission on Learning, that said we needed a recertification process for our teachers; like the College of Teachers' recommendations about the appropriate written test, the language proficiency test, the induction for new teachers, their advice and input. I'm also very much interested in listening to the advice and the input we had from many, many parents and students and teachers, who said more needs to be done to improve the quality of teaching out there. That is the input and those are the recommendations we are listening to. Those are the recommendations we based our commitments to the voters on in 1999 when we said in Blueprint that we would bring in a good teacher testing program that would help improve the quality of teaching in this province.

Mr Marchese: They don't answer questions. This is question avoidance period, with this government. I've never seen a government that answered questions the way this government does.

There is no evidence to show that the teachers are operating in a substandard way. There is no evidence. Usually when you want to change a system you go for some evidence to show that we've got a problem. There is no problem. They've created a crisis in order to fix it, in order to be able to say to the public: "There's a big problem. We're fixing it." That's what it's about. I'm trying to tell her that I know the game, and some of the folks know the politics of your game too.

When the College of Teachers heard about your desire to have a teacher test they were horrified. It was nuts. It was a nutty idea. Then when you realized how stupid you were going to look with a number of people in society and in the profession, you changed the rules a little bit so now what you present today is a bit different.

What you have done today is no different than what's happening in the system already; 80% of elementary teachers already do professional development on their own time, at their own expense and paying for their own

child care, and now you are making professional development mandatory. They're doing it already; you're making it mandatory. You're trying to fix a problem where there is no crisis to be fixed, but that's the politics, I say to you. Why are you now, once again, ordering teachers to do something they already do?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, I know what he and his friends in opposition and some of the union leaders have tried to say. I know what they said they thought teacher testing was all about. I'm not here to explain why we're not doing what Earl Manners and OSSTF said. I'm here to say what we're doing, which is exactly what we said we would do: bring in a teacher testing program, bring in recertification, bring in a process that would effectively assess knowledge, skills and abilities. I've been saying that for a year. We went out and asked advice on it, not just from the College of Teachers but from many other groups, and we are acting on that advice to help improve the quality of teaching in Ontario, based on an understanding and a recognition that we do have many excellent teachers out there.

But you know, he's had a very convenient memory lapse over there. If they didn't think there was a problem with education in this province, if they didn't think there was a problem with quality education, then why did they go out and do a Royal Commission on Learning that recommended precisely what we're doing, and they supported it?

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My question is for the Minister of Education. A Ministry of Education document states that extracurricular activities are an important part of a student's education, especially in high school. It is indicated that parents have told the government they do not want their children denied important school-related activities. I am sure that the minister would agree that all students in the province should be treated equitably in this regard.

In my rural riding, there are secondary schools where over 80% of the student population is bused. As a result of your funding cuts, late buses that once provided the opportunity for students to stay after school have been cut. Your ministry indicates extracurricular activities are vital to a rich and fulfilling education. You are mandating school boards to provide these activities. You are mandating teachers to participate in these activities. Will you commit to the students in my riding that you will provide the additional resources to the school boards to reinstitute late school bus runs?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I really am having difficulty with Liberal research this month, I've got to tell you. First of all, when we started in 1995-96, the education budget was \$12.9 billion. Today it is well over \$13.4 billion. I have to tell you, math was not my strong point but that's more money, not \$1.6 billion less. Secondly, obviously the honourable member did not

read the budget that talked about more money for education. She obviously missed the reference to \$23 million more for boards for busing.

1450

Mrs Dombrowsky: The boards of education in my riding are underfunded in the area of transportation. For many years they have shared transportation routes and recently they've increased walking distances to achieve efficiencies. With increased enrolment, rural demographics and escalating fuel costs, school boards in my riding are hundreds of thousands of dollars over their transportation budget. Any increase they might have received in these transfers will not cover the transportation deficits they already have.

Bused kids in my riding have suffered long enough. Will you stop this unfairness? Minister, will you commit to provide additional funds for late buses in my riding?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, if school boards have increasing enrolment, the funding formula is designed to increase with the number of students they have. If a school board is a rural school board or a smaller school board, they get considerable extra money to compensate and to recognize that there are indeed problems.

We recognize that one of the challenges in transportation funding is that some boards have taken steps to be very efficient and effective; other boards have not. We've been trying to get all of the boards to be as effective as they can.

We announced in March that there will be additional monies for information technology, which was one of the things boards said they needed in order to do this. We met that demand. The bus transportation industry said very clearly that they needed interim funding until we jointly come up with a new way to fund this, because we have all agreed that we need to do that. So we put in another \$23 million for funding for transportation for school boards.

I would really like the honourable member to pay attention to some of those things that have been announced in this House and to some of the things that we are actually doing.

LITHOTRIPSY

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): My question is for the Minister of Health. There has been considerable discussion with respect to the lithotripsy machine and its installation at the Ottawa Hospital. I would like to bring to your attention some new and more recent information on the need for lithotripsy service in the Ottawa Hospital.

Knowing that the minister and our government are always looking for the best possible solution and efficiencies in meeting a need before spending hard-earned taxpayers' dollars, I understand the Ottawa Hospital has now prepared a business case that shows there are savings to the health care system if a lithotripsy program were implemented.

This hospital serves a catchment area of 1.3 million people and there's a growing demand for lithotripsy

services. Based on more current information, I understand the recent data from the Ottawa Hospital illustrates the demand for lithotripsy services now increasing in eastern Ontario at approximately 4% per year. This new data estimates that by the end of the fiscal year 2001-02, approximately 1,000 patients from the greater Ottawa-Carleton region will require lithotripsy treatments.

Minister, you are correct that there is excess capacity and that London and Toronto could meet the earlier demands for lithotripsy services; however, I understand that this more recent data and expected utilization show the need and that the services now in Ottawa can be justified based on growing patient volumes, the number of patients travelling to Quebec and the increased number of patients opting for more expensive surgery.

Minister, given this new and current information, can you provide me with reassurance that you and ministry officials will review this new information and consider placing lithotripsy service in the eastern Ontario hospital of Ottawa-Carleton?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): In response to the question, as the member knows, we presently have two centres that provide lithotripsy in the province. One is in Toronto at the St Michael's Hospital Wellesley site and one is in London at the St Joseph's Hospital site. We have been very carefully monitoring those two centres on an annual basis in order to ensure that we can continue to respond to the needs of people in this province.

We haven't seen much increased utilization in the past, but I do understand that the Ottawa Hospital has now submitted to us some additional information regarding expansion of the volume of patients who are going to be requiring lithotripsy services in the future and certainly we are prepared to take a look at that information and consider the proposal for an additional lithotripter in Ottawa.

Mr Coburn: Thank you, Minister, for the encouraging answer. As you know from the many generous volunteers and organizations across Ontario, we too have very generous individuals, organizations and businesses in my riding of Carleton-Gloucester, and indeed the Ottawa area, who want to partner with our government in bringing the best possible health care equipment and facilities to our communities. Your encouragement and leadership in health care will help us pursue those numerous initiatives and ideas, which will only enhance our ability to work with our partners to continue improving the health care system.

I understand the ability to do these cases through the lithotripsy program would increase the quality and safety for these patients. Minister, will you ensure my constituency of Carleton-Gloucester and the surrounding Ottawa area that this issue will be reviewed, and reviewed quickly?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I can certainly assure the member that the proposal is being reviewed, and I can also assure the member that there will be a very quick response, since we have carefully analyzed the proposal.

PELEE ISLAND LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Minister, the strike against the Pelee Island transportation company is now in its 14th day. Talks have broken off and there are no more scheduled. The island economy is suffering irreparable damage and agriculture is a significant part of that island economy. As well, tourism is suffering on the island and island residents are virtually stranded in the middle of Lake Erie. I've received a number of letters from island residents. I've received letters from the Pelee Island Co-operative Association, from Pelee Seed, from County Contracting, from many residents and businesses on the island.

I've urged the Minister of Transportation, because he is responsible for this transportation system, to become involved, and he has refused. Minister, will you show the leadership that the Minister of Transportation has chosen not to show and use your office to get the Minister of Transportation to invite the parties to the table and settle this dispute?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I just want to suggest that I share the concern of the member opposite of what the impact is on the farming community on Pelee Island, particularly as it relates to the spring season that is upon us. They need to be able to get back and forth as best they can.

I would like to point out that there are labour negotiations presently ongoing under the transportation field and I personally do not intend to intervene in that, but I share your concerns and we will bring those concerns forward to the parties involved. As it relates to the labour issue, I would ask the member, in his supplementary, to ask someone who is involved in labour as opposed to agriculture that same question.

Mr Crozier: Minister, obviously you don't know what's going on, even though I've kept you apprised. There are no negotiations going on. There isn't anybody at the table. I'm asking that you use your office to help do that.

I have been in contact with labour constantly through this, I've been in contact with the minister and the with you, and with the Minister of Northern Development and anybody else who will listen. But you're not listening. We've got people stranded in the middle of Lake Erie, we've got visitors on the island and property owners on the mainland. We've got tourists coming to the Pelee Island transportation company who haven't even been told there's a strike—not even the courtesy to inform them.

What I'm saying is that the Minister of Transportation and you and the Minister of Tourism can get together, invite the parties to the table and give the budget the flexibility that's needed because they're less than 3% apart. Surely the strike can be settled on the basis that you and the Minister of Transportation can tell the Ontario Northland's marine division to get the strike

settled. It's a reasonable offer. Get it done, and let's get back to business on Pelee Island.

Hon Mr Hardeman: I refer the question to the Minister of Labour for comment.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I would just say to the member opposite that this is not a typical labour dispute in the province of Ontario for the simple reason that it's in federal jurisdiction.

1500

Mr Crozier: Get out.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Get out? Now listen, my friend opposite, the fact of the matter is, we have certain responsibilities. Once you get to the ferry situation at Pelee Island it becomes a federal issue, because they handle the negotiations and they deal with the issue involved.

Let me tell you, there are licensed employees, 11 officers of the ferry services, that have settled. The strike involves the unlicensed employees, about 40 labourers and ranks including deckhands and dockhands and ticket agents, and they are members of the Seafarers International Union. That Seafarers International Union then falls under the surveillance of the federal government. So the question is, while you're calling my friend the Minister of Agriculture in the provincial government, and the ministers in this area, you would be far better off to talk to your federal cousins, who are ripping us off from health care dollars, and they can probably get to the bottom of this more quickly. The fact remains that it's not a provincial issue; it's a federal labour issue.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. During private members' business this morning, the member for Broadview-Greenwood claimed that our government had cut funding for children's protective services. I am under the impression that this is incorrect and that in fact this government has increased funding in this area. Could you clarify this issue, Minister?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I too share the concern my colleague has. In fact, it was stated this morning that this government had somehow reduced funding for child protection in the province of Ontario, and I want to assure my colleague that nothing could be further from the truth.

Since this government was elected, funding for child welfare and child protection has increased by more than 80%, and that shows the strong commitment this government has given to children in need and child welfare and child protection. Why has that happened? We have had a committed government that has made this issue a priority. We had my predecessor, the member for Durham West, work hard on this during her time at the ministry. This government, for the first time, has a minister solely responsible for children's issues in the member for Mississauga South, and what an incredible difference that has made to the government's deliberations.

We have 760 new child protection workers, increased rates for foster care, improved training for new and existing staff, a common risk assessment system, a new information database and 3,000 new computers.

Mr Tascona: Minister, could you tell the House in which direction you believe future funding for children's services in Ontario is headed?

Hon Mr Baird: There is in the new legislation the tough new child protection measures passed by this House last year. For the first time, we have a funding formula for children's aid societies that is now volume sensitive. If more children are requiring or are in need of urgent protection, the formula now is sensitive to providing additional resources for our children's aid societies to ensure that they can be there for these vulnerable children.

There is both good and bad news, I would say. Bad in the sense that we're always concerned when more children need help; good in that at least this legislation is, for the first time, giving a whole new set of tools and standards so that the child protection workers can intervene to provide these important and needed child protection and child welfare services.

Regrettably, in the short term I see that the budgets will probably be required to go up to help these vulnerable children. In the long term, the hope is that we can reduce the number of children who are even needing these new protection services.

TOBACCO TAXES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Last week Cancer Care Ontario released Ontario's cancer prevention blueprint. They estimate that about 50,000 Ontarians will be diagnosed with cancer this year and about 25,000 Ontarians will die from cancer. There's not one Ontarian whose life has not been touched by this terrible disease. What's more disturbing is that every year the number of new cases is increasing by 3%.

This morning, I read reports that the federal government and the provinces are nearing an agreement that would boost tobacco taxes. The revenues here could do a lot of good. Deputy Premier, will you commit today to put all of the funds generated from this tax increase into a dedicated fund for health promotion and illness prevention?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I know the Minister of Health wants to answer this important question.

Ms Lankin: It's a tax question.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the member already knows, our government has made a very strong commitment to the whole issue of reducing tobacco smoking in Ontario. We have, in particular, focused our efforts on young people, and we currently have ads on the TV that we hope will persuade young people not to embark on smoking. I can also tell you that we have increased our tobacco strategy

by \$10 million, from \$9 million to \$19 million. We certainly will continue to do everything we can.

When it comes to the issue of taxation, as the member knows, the Ontario tobacco tax rate is linked to the federal excise tax and duty rate. With regard to any proposed restoration of those tax levels, Ontario's tobacco rate will rise only if the federal government chooses to raise tobacco taxes. I know the finance minister has communicated that to Mr Martin.

Ms Lankin: I understand that, Minister. All previous governments, and your government as well, have dedicated resources to ending smoking. It's interesting that you talk about the increase of \$10 million to the tobacco strategy. Between 1995 and 1999, you dropped your health promotion budget by \$11.5 million, so you robbed one illness prevention budget line to support another.

If this proceeds and these new revenues from higher tobacco taxes come, what I'm asking you as health minister is to go to cabinet, to fight for that money, to have that money dedicated to a health promotion fund, to fill the gap. There are a lot of things you could be doing. We need more health promotion highlighting the links between diet, physical inactivity and cancer, as well as the effects of environmental carcinogens and occupational hazards. We need expanded screening programs. You need to establish a colorectal screening program. You've got a responsibility here as Minister of Health. Will you go to the cabinet table and will you fight to have those increased revenues from increased tobacco taxes put in a dedicated fund for health promotion?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As the member should understand, our government has contributed to increased health care spending in this province more than ever at any time in the history of Ontario. We have increased spending from \$17.4 billion to \$22 billion. We have shifted the focus from illness to wellness. We have invested in a breast cancer screening program. We will be announcing a cervical screening cancer program in June. We have introduced the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children initiative, where every child in this province is now screened to determine if they are at risk. We've invested \$67 million. We have the preschool speech and language program with a \$20-million investment. We recently announced in our budget that we would introduce an infant screening program.

The member certainly has not been listening carefully if she's not aware of the fact that this government has moved forward very aggressively on prevention and promotion of health.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. It has to do with Highway 407. We in the Liberal Party believe the public has an absolute right to know what kind of deal you struck with the owners of the 407 around tolls.

Tolls have gone up for many users by over 50%. To date, you have refused to release that. The owner, I might say, is releasing that information to investors, but you've refused to release that. Yesterday, after we waited two and a half months, we got this document. It was 91 pages long and 27 of them are blank. We continue to be stonewalled on this. We think that is unacceptable. The public is owed the information on the deal that you reached representing them and their tolls. Will you agree today to release to the public the details of the toll agreement you've reached with the 407 owner?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The government, as you've been told before, fully supports releasing the contract publicly through the freedom of information act. As you're probably aware, or maybe you're not, a third party has challenged its release to the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act was passed by the Liberals back in 1987 and you wouldn't want us to break the law to release the document while this challenge is presently before the commissioner.

1510

Mr Phillips: The minister must know that the owner of the 407 has made that document public. The minister must know that investors are profiting on that information. The minister must know that the owner raised \$325 million and said, "Come out and take a look at that agreement." That document has been made public to the investors in the 407, but the poor users of the 407, for whom you've allowed the tolls to go up 50%—they now are paying almost \$200 million a year in tolls, which is going to go to \$500 million—have been denied access to that information. I say again, the owner has made it public. Why in the world are you denying the public the same information that investors who are making millions of dollars have had access to? It is inappropriate, unfair and I insist that you release those documents immediately so that the public has the same information the investors have had for months and are making millions of dollars on.

Hon Mr Hodgson: This member has been around this House for a long time. He knows that the Liberal government, when they were in power, in 1987 passed legislation called the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. We would be breaking the law if we were to release the document while this challenge is before the commissioner. I have stated before, and you've been told before in this House, that our government fully supports releasing the contract publicly through the FOI process. As you know, a third party has challenged its release to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and we need to wait until that process is completed.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock for a quick moment. I am pleased to inform members of the

Legislative Assembly that today we have members of Parliament from the British House of Commons environmental audit committee. We welcome our special guests.

YOUNG WORKER AWARENESS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Labour. First, I would like to commend the Minister of Labour for his respectful and sensitive response to the question earlier today.

Minister, as you probably know, or at least I hope you do, I'm a parent of five children and three of them are home for the summer looking for a summer job. On a more serious note, though, as students are coming home from university and looking for that summer job, I can tell you that I, as a parent, and I know most of my constituents and the members here, would be very concerned that the students are entering the workplace for the first time.

Along with my constituents, I have concern for the potential dangers in the workplace. Safety in the workplace is a concern for each of us, especially as it pertains to our young people. You know that the Safe Communities Foundation founder, Mr Paul Kells, has contributed significantly—his son was tragically killed in the workplace. Minister, can you tell the House today what you're doing to protect the young workers and students in this province?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thank you for the question. Obviously, workplace safety is important to everybody in the House, but particularly when it comes to young people who are going out to work for the first time at summer jobs in situations that tend to be more dangerous than the typical work performed, say, around here.

The fact of the matter is that we are marking Monday as North American Occupational Health and Safety Week. The MOL, Ministry of Labour, along with WSIB and health and safety associations, are proud to host a week-long summit that brings Canada, Mexico and the United States together to highlight good health and safety practices.

Over the course of the week, organizers hope to offer the young worker awareness program to almost 5,000 high school students across the province. Programs teach young soon-to-be workers their rights and responsibilities regarding health and safety. This, in my opinion, is a great achievement for NAOHS week. Thanks to all those health and safety systems that have come together to make it possible. I understand this situation we have today. We are working hard to make sure that there are no accidents and no deaths in the workplace, particularly in the summer, and I think all members would agree with that as a noble cause.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much, Minister, for that response. It's encouraging to see the leadership you provide for that ministry.

I'm also pleased to hear, during this time, the amount of time that you're spending looking after the needs of injured workers. However, a week is simply not enough, Minister, as you know, to properly educate the people in the workplace today. What other steps are you taking to make sure the workplace is safe for everyone?

Hon Mr Stockwell: We are committed to creating an Ontario where young people are free from workplace injury and illness. The NAOHS initiative is only one aspect of our commitment.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: January 2000, as the member for St Catharines knows—it was endorsed in his previous life when he was in government those many years ago—MOL facilitated a young worker health and safety stakeholders meeting, with 40 stakeholders.

This is a non-partisan issue. I know the member for Peterborough is very active in this with respect to young worker awareness. I know the member for Thunder Bay is also extremely interested. Not to leave anybody out, there have been many calls to my offices from many people around this province, of course including Mr Hoy. The fact remains, we all are committed to making workplaces safer for the young people involved. I know first-hand that if it matters and we've got to travel the globe to find out what needs to be done to effect the changes, the member for St Catharines will be the first on the trip.

AGRICULTURAL FUNDING

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Since my election I've demanded a fair share for agriculture from both levels of government, yet you took credit for the additional federal money that was announced. In fact, Ontario MPs lobbied for that money, the farmers of Ontario lobbied for that money and so did I.

Even with your supposed increases, agriculture still receives only one half of 1% of total Ontario spending. You want more money from the feds, but they have enhanced their AIDA program to include a fair evaluation on inventory that will give \$30,000 to \$40,000 more per farmer on average. You refuse to do the same, and the federal government says your rules stand in the way of Ontario farmers getting the federal money. Will you promise today that nothing in the terms of your whole farm relief program will limit farmers from their access to the full federal share of monies?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I very much appreciate and I would agree with the member opposite that it was not I alone who was able to get the fair share for Ontario's farmers. In fact, it was every farmer, every commodity group and every farm organization in this province that helped us do that, standing up to the federal government and suggesting that we in Ontario deserved a fair share.

I would take one exception: I'll take the member's word for it, but it was after we got the federal money that

we had the first opportunity of hearing that the member opposite was standing up on behalf of Ontario farmers. It came out after we received the money that he said, "I have been speaking to the federal minister behind the scenes and that may have had some impact on why we got the money." That may or may not be true, and we will take the member's word for it.

I want to point out to the member opposite, on the issue of the inventory levels as it applies to the whole farm relief program, that the federal government has announced that this is going to be part of their share of the package, but at this point in time we are still waiting for confirmation from the federal government that would allow us to implement that on behalf of the whole farm—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Hoy: Minister, your answer was full of technical dickering and posturing. This may be highly technical information, but you're not fooling me and you're not fooling the farmers of Ontario. They need every dollar of that federal money.

Minister, I contend that you got more money from the feds than you bargained for and you can't afford to put your money where your mouth is. Will you promise that your rules will not jeopardize one cent of that federal money flowing to the farmers of Ontario?

1520

Hon Mr Hardeman: Very much so. I want to assure you that the farmers of Ontario will receive all the money that's available from the federal government, and every federal government dollar will be matched by 40 cents from the Ontario government. Not to be grandstanding and not to be pointing out things that would be less than totally true, I would point out that the federal government has recently been telling us that the announcement they made—

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Point of order.

The Speaker: I'm sorry, I missed that. Was there a point of order?

Mr Duncan: I know you were distracted for a moment, Mr Speaker, but the minister alleged that a statement my colleague made was less than true.

The Speaker: I should know better than to turn my back even for a second. I did do that and I apologize. But the member is an honourable member, and I'm sure that if he did he would withdraw it. I apologize for not being right on top of it. I believe the minister was wrapping up. If he did say anything, he could withdraw it.

Hon Mr Hardeman: If indeed I said anything unparliamentary, I totally withdraw it. I was just pointing out that the facts, as they were being stated—I presume on behalf of his federal colleagues—were different than the truth would portray. If that means I was saying something less than parliamentary, I withdraw that.

I would point out that we have had correspondence from the federal government that the program they are putting in place—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up. The time for oral questions is over.

PETITIONS

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas essential health care and educational services have been deprived of government funding because the Conservative government of Mike Harris has diverted these funds to self-serving propaganda in the form of pamphlets delivered to homes, newspaper advertisements and radio and TV commercials;

"Whereas the Harris government advertising blitz is a blatant abuse of public office and a shameful waste of taxpayers' dollars;

"Whereas the Harris Conservatives ran on a platform of eliminating what it referred to as 'government waste and unnecessary expenditures,' while it squanders well over \$100 million on clearly partisan advertising;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative government and Mike Harris to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising."

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with this petition.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas existing adoption secrecy legislation is outdated and unjust;

"Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; those rights are denied to persons affected by secrecy provisions in adoption laws of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts in Ontario;

"Whereas 20% of persons in Ontario are directly or indirectly affected by restricted rights to personal information available to other citizens;

"Whereas the adopted person's right to his or her birth identity is rooted in a basic and fundamental human need;

"Whereas most birth parents did not ask for lifelong confidentiality; it was imposed on them involuntarily;

"Whereas research shows that not knowing basic personal information has harmed adopted persons, birth parents, adoptive parents and other birth relatives;

"Whereas research shows that access to adoption information does not cause harm;

"Whereas research shows that unqualified access to information in adoption satisfies the overwhelming majority of the parties involved;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to enact revision of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts to:

"Permit unrestricted access to full personal identifying birth information to adopted persons and adult children

of adopted persons; and unrestricted access to the adopted person's amended birth certificate to birth parents, birth grandparents and siblings and other birth relatives, when the adopted person reaches 18;

"Permit unrestricted access to identifying information to adoptive parents of minor children, emancipated minor adoptees and individuals with legal guardianship for an adopted person in special circumstances;

"Allow adopted persons and birth relatives to file a notice stating their wish for no contact;

"Replace mandatory reunion counselling with optional counselling;

"Permit access to agency and court files when original statistical information is insufficient for identification of and contact with birth relatives;

"Recognize open adoptions in the legislation."

I will affix my signature to this petition, as I fully support it.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to pass to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

PRIX D'ESSENCE

GASOLINE PRICES

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): J'ai ici une pétition adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

« Attendu que le prix des produits pétroliers a augmenté significativement dans les derniers six mois ;

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has done nothing to protect consumers and is afraid to take on the big oil companies;

« Attendu que le marché de vente en gros pour les produits pétroliers est contrôlé par un oligopole d'huile qui gère 85 % du marché de vente en gros ;

"Whereas the long-term increase in the price is mostly due to taxes that have doubled in the past decade;

« Attendu que le ministre fédéral des Finances, Paul Martin, est prêt à discuter avec les provinces afin de baisser les taxes sur l'essence ;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows: that Mike Harris take initiative and lower provincial taxes on petroleum products."

I add my signature to it.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 85 people. It's an honour to present it during Hospice Palliative Care Week.

"Whereas most Ontario residents require adequate access to effective hospice palliative care in time of need;

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support needs to be a priority in our health care system;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario unanimously passed a resolution supporting the right to hospice and palliative care on October 15, 1998, as presented by Bob Wood, MPP, which called for a task force to be appointed to fully implement an effective hospice palliative care bill of rights;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to fulfill the resolution, as approved by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, by appointing the hospice palliative task force and giving it a suitable mandate to fulfill the requirements of the resolution.

"Hospice palliative care is care which aims to relieve suffering and improve the quality of life of people who are living with or dying from advanced illness, or those who are bereaved."

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTIONS

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I have a petition regarding the arbitrarily imposed \$925 head tax on international adoptions.

"Whereas the Conservative government has arbitrarily imposed a \$925 head tax on international adoptions; and

"Whereas the cost to the government for processing international adoptions is no greater than that for domestic adoptions, which are not subject to the head tax; and

"Whereas in the United States parents are offered a tax credit of \$5,000 to offset the enormous costs of international adoption; and

"Whereas the cost for an international adoption can range from \$20,000 to \$30,000;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows, and demand that this head tax be immediately revoked."

I affix my signature to this petition.

1530

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, I have a little preamble here. I'm presenting this petition on behalf of the Honourable Dan Newman, MPP for Scarborough Southwest. As you would know, as a minister of the crown he's unable to present petitions, so I'll be presenting it on his behalf.

The lead petitioner here is Cay Sheddon, a resident of Scarborough. I shall read:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians with a developmental disability are in growing danger of inadequate support because compensation to staff of not-for-profit agencies is, based on a recent survey, on average, 20% to 25% less than compensation for others doing the same work in provincial institutions or similar work in other settings;

"Whereas there are hundreds of senior parents in Ontario who saved the Ontario government millions of dollars by keeping their child with a developmental disability at home, and who are still caring for their adult child;

"Whereas there is no place for most of these adults with a developmental disability to go when the parents are no longer able to provide care;

"Whereas these parents live with constant anxiety and despair;

"Whereas these adult children will end up in Ontario nursing homes and hospitals if there is no appropriate place to provide care,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To significantly increase compensation for workers in not-for-profit agencies so it is comparable to the compensation of government-funded workers in identical or similar occupations; and

"To provide the resources necessary to give appropriate support to Ontarians with a developmental disability who at present have no place to go when their parents are no longer able to care for them."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition myself.

HUNTING IN WILDERNESS PARKS

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a petition. It's actually a very short petition, but it's a very important one, from members of the community of Don Valley East. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is proposing Ontario's Living Legacy proposed land use strategy permits hunting in designated wilderness parks which are currently used for vacationing and recreation for the general public; and

"Whereas we believe this change in policy would endanger the serenity, ecology and remoteness of these existing wilderness parks. The Legislative Assembly does not have to wait until one innocent vacationer is shot in error until reconsidering the danger of allowing hunters into our precious wilderness parks;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To continue the prohibition of hunting in wilderness parks in order to ensure the preservation of safety, tranquility and environmental well-being."

I will affix my signature to this petition.

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): The petitions just keep coming in relentlessly. Again I should give some explanation. The Honourable Dan Newman, the Minister of the Environment, is unable to present this petition, so respectfully and diligently on behalf of him and his constituent Judy Patterson, I will submit the following petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians with a developmental disability are in growing danger of inadequate support because compensation to staff of not-for-profit agencies is, based on a recent survey, on average 20% to 25% less than compensation for others doing the same work in provincial institutions or similar work in other settings;

"Whereas there are hundreds of senior parents in Ontario who saved the Ontario government millions of dollars by keeping their child with a developmental disability at home, and who are still caring for their adult child;

"Whereas there is no place for most of these adults with a developmental disability to go when the parents are no longer able to provide care;

"Whereas these parents live with constant anxiety and despair;

"Whereas these adult children will end up in Ontario nursing homes and hospitals if there is no appropriate place to provide care,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To significantly increase compensation for workers in not-for-profit agencies so it is comparable to the compensation of government-funded workers in identical or similar occupations; and

"To provide the resources necessary to give appropriate support to Ontarians with a developmental disability who at present have no place to go when their parents are no longer able to care for them."

I'm pleased to sign, support and present this petition.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a petition, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase;"—that's certainly true in Don Valley East—"and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I have affixed my signature to the petition.

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a very important petition from members of my riding in Don Valley East. It reads:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians with a developmental disability are in growing danger of inadequate support because compensation to their workers is, based on a recent survey, on average 20% to 25% less than compensation for others doing the same work in provincial institutions or similar work in other settings;

"Whereas there are hundreds of senior parents in Ontario who have saved the Ontario government millions of dollars by keeping their child with a developmental disability at home, and who are still caring for their adult child;

"Whereas there is no place for most of these adults with a developmental disability to go when the parents are no longer able to provide care;

"Whereas these parents live with constant anxiety and despair;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To significantly increase compensation for workers in the developmental services sectors so it is comparable to the compensation of government-funded workers in identical or similar occupations; and

"To provide the resources necessary to give appropriate support to Ontarians with a developmental disability who have no support when their parents are no longer able to care for them."

I too have affixed my signature to this petition.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I have a statement of business of the House for next week.

On Monday afternoon, we will continue with Bill 72, the Taxpayer Dividend Act.

On Monday evening, we will debate a resolution by the Attorney General.

On Tuesday afternoon, we will continue debate on Bill 55, the Parental Responsibility Act.

On Tuesday evening, we expect to debate Bill 74, the Education Accountability Act.

Wednesday afternoon is to be determined.

On Wednesday evening, we will continue to debate Bill 74, the Education Accountability Act.

Thursday morning, during private members' public business, we will discuss ballot items 25 and 26.

On Thursday afternoon, we expect to do Bill 74, the Education Accountability Act.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAXPAYER DIVIDEND ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE VERSEMENT

D'UN DIVIDENDE AUX CONTRIBUABLES

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 10, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 72, An Act to pay a dividend to Ontario taxpayers, cut taxes, create jobs and implement the Budget / Projet de loi 72, Loi visant à verser un dividende aux contribuables de l'Ontario, à réduire les impôts, à créer des emplois et à mettre en oeuvre le budget.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's good to have the opportunity to speak to this bill. Mercifully, we have 20 minutes. It gives us some time to be able to raise some issues contained in this bill.

Of course, much of this connects to the budget announcement they made—good God, when was it? Last week? Two weeks ago? It seems like so long ago. You recall that in that budget the government had a whole lot of goodies to give out. They were so proud of their surplus that they decided to give most of that surplus away to the business sector. They know who their friends are. I've got to tell you, we New Democrats, when we were in power, didn't know who our friends were sometimes. But the Tories don't forget their friends. The Tories have the wealthy beside them, with them, under them, above them, around them, around their necks, on their backs, and they love it. They love it to such an extent that they have decided to give them a large gift of

about \$4.5 billion over the next couple of years. Not bad, if you can get it. Sometimes one would wish that we were all so lucky to be such rich business people to be able to enjoy some of the benefits that flow from being connected to this kind of government. Of course, some of us are unlucky not to be so well connected and so we lose out.

1540

Four billion to five billion bucks going out to wealthy corporations—it's almost obscene. It's theatre of the grotesque. But of course you'll hear Tories, the new Alliance people, defend what they have done. They say, "By giving more tax breaks to the wealthy, we will create more jobs." My argument to the general public watching is this: If the corporate sector has done so well in the last five years without Mike Harris dishing out the tax breaks, why would they give them an additional \$4 billion to \$5 billion in tax breaks? If they created such a good economy without them, why do they need the Tories to give our dollars, our taxpayers' money, back to the wealthy people who don't need it, who presumably created a great deal of wealth on their own without Mike Harris? And now they want Mike Harris to give them back \$4 billion or \$5 billion? No, they don't. It's a corporate giveaway. It's a corporate gift. It's a corporate welfare Tory-Alliance society we're living in.

These people love to give money away. They love to give my money away. They love to give the taxpayers' money away. They're not giving it to us. They're giving it to corporations, four to five billion bucks' worth. Were they screaming for those dollars? I don't think they were screaming for that money. So why in heaven's name would you give it to them? Why would you give my money away to them? There is absolutely no evidence that giving \$4 billion to \$5 billion worth of taxpayers' money in tax breaks to these corporations is going to create jobs. That's what the corporate sector says, but there's absolutely no evidence to prove that that money will create more jobs. In fact, where do you think that money's going to go? That money's going to go into the pockets of the very wealthy, who don't need it. Instead of giving the people who have been whacked by this government just a couple of dollars back—I'm going to speak to the couple of dollars they have given them back, though—but in terms of giving a couple of dollars back by way of services, the services they are losing and have lost under them. Instead of doing that, they give my money and your money, good taxpayer, away to the wealthy. Think about it. Isn't that theatre of the grotesque? I know there's theatre of the absurd. To be truthful, I'm not sure there's theatre of the grotesque. But that's what it amounts to.

So how brilliant they have become. How Machiavellian they are. What good politicians they have become as disciples of Machiavelli, because what they have decided to do, given that the income tax cut hasn't worked so very well in the past because they haven't seen any—they said: "We've got a bright idea. We're going to send them a cheque. We're going to send them

\$200 in the mail and when they get it they're going to say, 'Good God, Santa Claus came early.' They're going to say, 'Finally Mike Harris has given me something that I can see.'" They are bright. They are as good as they come. But I've got to tell you, giving \$200 away to what, four or five million people, amounts to one billion bucks. I get \$200, but in total it means giving away \$1 billion of our money to individuals.

So the government says: "Well, if they get \$200, they can decide what to do with it. It's not my money. It's your money." Did they ever give the public a choice as to how they want to see their money being spent? No. They decided to give them back their money by fiat, because they're good people and they know that that hard-earned money is theirs. They gave them no choice about how else it could have been spent, but they're going to send it in the mail in the next couple of months.

The good thing about this politics is that it's crass, it's visceral. It's placebo politics; it's making people feel good. Does getting 200 bucks make people feel good? Yeah, sure it does, because the working class, the one New Democrats tend to support, says, "Better me getting the 200 bucks than somebody else," right? The workers, who should be supporting the NDP but end up supporting these people, say, "Better me than somebody else," because they know that if they didn't get the 200 bucks, the corporations would get that one billion bucks.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): Are you saying the workers aren't smart enough?

Mr Marchese: Monsieur Young, I want to address this point to you.

Mr Young: Through the Speaker.

Mr Marchese: Through the Speaker, always. The corporate sector is getting four billion bucks. The worker says, "Hmm, I know that's always the case," and so the worker reasons out, "If the corporations are going to get that extra billion and move from \$4 billion to \$5 billion, better I get the 200 bucks." They're not dumb, are they, mon ami David Young from Willowdale? No, the workers are smart; they're not stupid. They're not going to say, "Don't give it to me," because they know that if they don't get the 200 bucks, the corporate sector is going to get it. They're no fools. Four billion gone to the corporate sector; one billion gone so that every individual who pays income tax gets 200 bucks back in the mail.

Do you know what \$1 billion could do? It could do so much to fix, to patch up the problems these people have created. It could do so much. To hear these Tories say, "Ha, as if somehow only socialists have the preserve of a social conscience." "Tories do too," admits the Minister of Finance. It's oxymoronic, but I suspect more moronic than oxy. There is no social conscience that comes from the other side, the government side; otherwise \$1 billion that's just gone would have been put back into essential areas. Otherwise, the \$4 billion that the corporate sector doesn't need would have been put back to the social service areas that have been cut, to health that has been cut, to education that has been cut.

I say to the Reformers out there, the new Alliance people: If Mike Harris doesn't want to put \$1 billion out of the \$5 billion—the other \$4 billion he has given away to the corporate sector—into education and social services or health, why doesn't he take that money and reduce the debt? After all, the debt is a load we all carry, socialists and non-socialists alike. We all carry that debt load, and the children of New Democrats and Liberals and Tories are going to carry the burden of the debt load. So why didn't they, as good Alliance people, put that \$1 billion to reducing the debt, and in so doing, help all of our children and their children's children for the future? You hear these Tories often talk about the debt load and the future problem our children will have to bear. If they speak that way, surely you would think the Tories would say, "It would be in all of our interests to reduce the debt," instead of wasting it away, \$1 billion away to about five million people, but that's not the game.

The game of these people is to make sure they do politics well; that they do placebo politics in a way that makes them feel good. Don't give them the medicine they need. Give them the medicine that they actually do not need, but tell them this is what will cure their illness. It's grotesque. They've got \$700 million going out to people, the money managers, the people who manage your RRSP, good taxpayers of Ontario watching this program. Do you know what these Tories are doing? The first \$100,000 these money managers make, these paper pushers who say, "I'm going to invest some money here," and a couple of minutes later they're monitoring the screen and move their couple of dollars to some other place—it's all paper transactions, paper money, the new paper economy, the new millionaires.

1550

Mike Harris says the first \$100,000 will not be taxed. Do you know what that amounts to? A \$700-million giveaway to people who play in the paper economy. Do these people work? That's corporate welfare, in my view, people pushing paper money around. In my view, those people don't work. Everybody else works hard, but these people earn millions of dollars. They're not the real workers, yet this government says, "Up to \$100,000 we're not going to tax your money." Can you believe it? People have loads of money, and Harris says to them, "Don't worry, your first \$100,000 doesn't get taxed." It's obscene welfare for the corporate individual who is sucking our money from us, sucking money away from the taxpayer, and we're throwing it back to those individuals.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: That's welfare. That's corporate welfare. We give paper pushers, people who monitor economic transactions and the stock options of one company or another, up to \$700 million just for the fun of playing with our money as they become millionaires, and we say, "This is good; we're not going to tax their money." It's obscene. It's stupid; it's downright stupid.

That \$1 billion could do so much for housing. The federal government, those so-good Liberals at the federal

level, abandoned this field. These Tories at the provincial level—this new Alliance party—are now building. They have a plan. What plan? The plan isn't working, but they say they have a plan to build housing. The private sector is not building, the federal government is not building and these fine Tories are not building. Talk about a boondoggle. This budget is a boondoggle. But to have people homeless and to have people who are renting on the verge of becoming homeless, that, to these fine Alliance people, is a boondoggle. It's hurtful. It makes you want to cry at times.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Mrs Elliott—I've got to find her name. Where is she from? Guelph-Wellington. She's yapping away over there. She yaps and yaps and yaps. I'm going to enjoy her two-minute intervention.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: But you can. Urge somebody else not to speak so I can listen to your remarks. I'm sure you have a lot to say; you are yapping so much in response to what I'm saying. Please, two minutes.

No money for housing. What about tuition fees? My daughter is in university, my other daughter is going to university this year and my son in a couple of years. Four years of university is the equivalent of a debt of \$20,000 to \$25,000, assuming you do nothing else and assuming you are in the arts program. And this government says: "Not a problem. Access is not a problem. If you need a loan, we'll give it to you. So access is not an issue." But a debt of \$20,000 to \$30,000 is a heavy debt, a heavy load to carry. A lot of young people who have to carry \$20,000 to \$30,000 with wages going down in a good economy know they won't be able to pay that back very soon. So instead of increasing the contribution of government so we can make tuition fees lower so people can afford to go to university or college, we have no money for it. But we can blow \$1 billion so you can have \$200 and we can blow \$4 billion so we can give it away to the corporate sector that has been doing well without that money. They'll pocket that money. There is no evidence it will produce jobs. Yet there is so much to be done, so much that could be done with \$4 billion given away to people who don't need it.

You have these kinds of figures that I want to put on the record and that I need to speak to. There is over \$1.3 billion in new tax giveaways this year and \$4 billion by 2004. This tax budget is a gift to corporate Ontario. Out of this year's 67 tax cuts, 42 go to profitable corporations and businesses; 27% of the new income tax breaks go to 5% of income earners at a cost of \$733 million. Things Ontarians name as top priorities, such as health and education, take a back seat to the tax cuts that go to the wealthy.

People have heard me say I am not a fan of tax cuts. I don't support the tax cuts from the federal Liberals. I don't support the tax cuts that New Democrats are engaged in in other provinces, because I think they are wrong. I think we need to save the money to provide basic infrastructure, and I say we need to save the money

because when the next recession comes and your coffers are empty, we as Ontarians are going to be in serious trouble. So I don't support the Tories in it and I don't support the Liberals, and I don't support the New Democrats either, engaging in tax cuts in other provinces because they feel they need to do it. They feel they need to jump on the bandwagon and not be left out of the fact that Liberals and Tories have given tax cuts. I think it's profoundly wrong for New Democrats to have done that as well.

I know there is public pressure. The rich people who own the ideological media, the ones who own the press, the television, any kind of media that communicate a message to people—these are the people who have put pressure on governments and the public to say, first of all, that inflation has to go down, which cut thousands of jobs in the early years. Interest rates went up, which cut thousands of jobs in those early years. Then they went on the bandwagon saying that deficits were the real problem, and they changed that. Now they say tax cuts. After the tax cuts, what's next? I don't know.

What I know is that real people are hurting and real wages are going down. In a good economy, wages are going down. Forty percent of new jobs go to self-employed individuals who have been fired by governments and the private sector, 25% are contractual, 25% are part-time and only 6.6% of the new jobs are full-time. What does that tell you? That a whole lot of people at the bottom are earning poor wages, not enough to keep up with the kind of economy we have.

A whole heap of people up here making a whole lot of money don't need it. Yet these fine Alliance individuals say, "We have to take care of our corporate friends; they need money," without any economic evidence from any serious economists who say that will create jobs. But evidence is irrelevant, because what these people are engaged in is politics. Make people feel good, give them 200 bucks, waste a whole \$1 billion in that regard, make the corporations happy so they continue to give them the corporate donations they need to run their million-dollar campaigns. That's what it's about. It saddens me. It is theatre of the grotesque.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Comments and questions?

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I always enjoy listening to the remarks of the member for Trinity-Spadina, in which he holds out the hard core mantra of socialism. We know where he is coming from.

It is to be noted that, good gracious, the Manitoba NDP actually introduced some modest tax relief in their budget. As the member says, he doesn't agree with that. He is dead wrong when he says there are no economists out there who promote, not only practically but in the theory, in the literature, that jobs, tax reduction and lower expenditures stimulate the economy. I challenged the finance critic of the NDP the other night to name a jurisdiction in North America, Europe or anywhere in the world actually, whether it's a country, a state or a province, where the premise is that if you have higher

taxes, whatever their source, you end up having greater prosperity. There isn't one, because if you use Sweden, even the Swedish government, over the last few years, has introduced the concept of tax relief at whatever level.

I find it also strange that the member for Trinity-Spadina is so dismissive of work. We over here value work. Whether it's hard work, going out when—I can remember, as a kid, my first job was delivering the Toronto Telegram—200 papers—hunting golf balls and cutting asparagus. Hard work. Today we have people in the new economy who work just as hard with their brains. To dismiss them or anybody who is involved in the work world demonstrates how far out the member for Trinity-Spadina has gotten, unfortunately.

1600

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I'd like to congratulate the member for Trinity-Spadina on his remarks. He's made some very good points. It was the finance minister, Mr Eves, who said the measure of a truly just society is the way it treats the less fortunate, the least fortunate in the community.

If you look at what is actually in the budget, those who are doing very well do very well by this budget. Of that there is no dispute. But those who are the most vulnerable, those who are the least fortunate, there's nothing for them in here. I think Mr Eves really should assess and evaluate whether or not he believes the statement he made that you don't have to be a socialist to have a social conscience, because this budget has no social conscience.

In fact, in the areas of housing and public transit, I agree with the mayor of Toronto, who said it very well; that some citizens are going to do very well by this but there is nothing in this budget for the city of Toronto. We saw yesterday a continuation of the boorish behaviour of our Premier, of the leader of this province, to blindside our mayor, to send a letter, frankly, which is so divorced from reality out to the media to try to sell a position that is just simply incorrect. The mayor has it right.

The people who have read this budget know what the facts are. We know we're losing our competitive edge when it comes to post-secondary education. We are spending less money in this province on post-secondary education than we did in 1995. That's the legacy of the Harris government: deinvestment in the areas which are most critical and in most need. In fact, they haven't replaced the money they've cut from the property tax portion of education. A cut to education, a cut to post-secondary, no money for the most vulnerable—the member from Trinity-Spadina said it very well.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to take this opportunity to comment on a few of the points that were made by the member for Trinity-Spadina. I first want to say it's always interesting to listen to my colleague on these issues.

First of all to the issue of the tax cut, I frankly believe that if you ask anybody up front, "Do you want a tax cut?" the answer's going to be yes. I want a tax cut. My neighbour wants a tax cut. Everybody wants a tax cut.

Corporations want tax cuts. The poor want tax cuts. The rich want tax cuts. Everybody would like to have one. That's not the issue. It's like saying, "Do children like candy?" Of course kids like candy, but do we as parents—well, let's not even go there. The point is, everybody wants to have a tax cut. The issue is, what does it cost us in the long run?

There are a couple of things. First of all, the choice by this government to give the tax cuts that it did in this particular budget means we're not going to have the money to pay for health care. We're not going to have the money to reinvest and pay down our debt. This government gives a tax cut, but yet our debt keeps on increasing, something they don't seem to get into their heads when it comes to trying to deal with the real issue, which is the indebtedness of Ontario. They ran a whole campaign on trying to deal with bringing down the deficit, but we hear they're totally absent on the issue of dealing with the debt. These guys borrowed money during the time they were in a deficit situation to give people tax cuts, which event not only prolonged us balancing our budget, it increased the debt. I think the member makes a very good point.

It's not a question that people don't want tax cuts. I want a tax cut. But the question is, are they prudent and wise in providing tax cuts in the way this government did? I would say no, because what they've managed to do quite frankly is indebt us more as a province. They shouldn't have dealt with this kind of tax cut in the way that they have. I think it was wrong.

Mr Young: I listened with interest to the remarks made by the member for Trinity-Spadina. I should say at the outset that I have great respect for the member as an individual and I certainly respect his skills as an orator, but I was sincerely disappointed by a couple of the underlying and very clear themes in his presentation.

First, we heard the member talk about the fact that the workers of this province, the people of this province, were somehow being deceived, or bought is what he was intimating, by reason of the fact that they were going to be getting a tax cut. We heard the member opposite say very clearly that there are other factors that account for the reason that they had to increase debt. He looks to the United States, as the does the Liberal Party, for reasons for our economic success over the last number of years.

I am offended by this because I know for a fact that it's the hard work of the people of this province that have led to the growth and the success that we have achieved. I don't look beyond our borders for the answer. I know that the answer lies right here in Ontario. I know that the people of this province understood the issues. I know they understood, come election time, that it was their prerogative to say very clearly, as they did, no to higher taxes, no to spiralling debt. They said they didn't want any more deficits. They said they were tired of the continued high unemployment that came with the Liberal and the NDP governments that preceded us. They said very clearly that they did not wish to mortgage their children's future any further. It was for that reason in

1995 and once again in 1999 that the people of this province, after considering the platforms put forward by all three parties and the debates that surrounded those platforms, decided to vote in the way they did, and I respect them for that.

The Acting Speaker: Two-minute reply.

Mr Marchese: I appreciate the interventions. I just want to say that often the Tories make the absurd, unsubstantiated claim that their income tax cuts are the ones that have created 700,000 or 800,000 jobs. They make that claim on an ongoing basis, never substantiated. I have dared these members on a regular basis to bring forth one economist who would say that 700,000 jobs have been created as a result of the income tax cuts, which many claim has happened. Then, of course, when you engage them, they say, "No, no, perhaps it's not 700,000, but it has created this boom of jobs." The point is that it doesn't and it hasn't. The point is, a whole lot of money is going out for the few jobs that it probably does create. The few jobs that it may be creating doesn't warrant the billions and billions of dollars that are going out. That's why I say it's obscene and theatre of the grotesque when they say that.

I don't say that I dismiss workers. I said that the people-pushers of the people-economy, the ones who manage our money, the ones who make millions of dollars—it is obscene that they should get a tax break of the kind that they're giving, that the first \$100,000 of the \$1 million doesn't get taxed. It's obscene. I'm saying that's corporate welfare. I'm saying that if there is any welfare that should be attacked, it's that kind of welfare. That's what I said in my remarks.

When we talk about mortgaging our children's future, then spend the \$1 billion you wasted on the \$200 you're giving me and reduce the debt, if you're not going to patch up the other services. That's what I said. So I say it's wrong what they've done. No, I don't say, "You've got the 200 bucks; give it the way you want." I'm telling you, you should have reduced the debt if that's what concerns you.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Essex has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Labour concerning the Pelee Island ferry labour dispute. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

Further debate?

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): At the outset, I would just like to indicate that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Mississauga East.

I'm very pleased to be able to speak to this bill in the House today called the Taxpayer Dividend Act. This is a legislative bill whose purpose is to implement the various ideas that were suggested in the budget. It speaks to five acts and I'll list them. They are: the Corporations Tax Act, the Income Tax Act, the Land Transfer Tax Act, the Mining Tax Act and the Retail Sales Tax Act.

1610

I have a lot of things in my mind today about this bill. I am enticed to respond immediately to my colleagues

across the way, because they have said so many things that I so disagree with, but I will first of all indicate that the budget we are responding to in this act is probably one of the most promising budgets we've seen in Ontario for decades. We have finally arrived at the point where we have a balanced budget, and not only this year but in fact it turns out we've had a balanced budget for a whole year now with a surplus of \$654 million, which has been already allocated towards our debt.

This is wonderful news for the province of Ontario, because for the first time we're not going to be spending money we don't have. This has been a practice in the past for former governments, and a government we are very proud to be part of now has finally got that \$11-billion deficit wrestled to the ground, and we're now beginning to see an opportunity to attack the debt, which all of us are very pleased about.

It's no secret how we started upon this road to success. We reduced spending, we implemented tax cuts, we prioritized our spending and we did everything we could to encourage Ontario to become a thriving economic climate that would encourage investment in this province. We have seen the beginnings of the turnaround that was so desperately needed in this province: 701,000 jobs being created; unemployment rates that are lower than other jurisdictions across Canada, and that certainly holds true for my riding of Guelph-Wellington.

We have been diligent and we have been balanced in our approach, and I think this has been the key to our success. But we also recognize that there is an awful lot more to do, for two reasons. Number one, we do not have the economic prosperity all across the province that we would like. Certainly my riding is doing very well, as are many in southwestern Ontario and other parts of the province. But there are some areas that do need more attention. We recognize that and want to see every Ontarian with the opportunities that are deserved and owed to them. But we also recognize that Ontario, like all other jurisdictions, is now part of a very challenging global economy. Speaker, just as you and I can instantly talk to someone around the world—I spoke to my daughter today at lunch. It was her birthday. She's going to school in England. It was like talking to someone in the next office tower. We are connected to the world in so many ways that we've never been in the past, and that's no less true for business. They can choose where they're going to invest, and they look very carefully at the economic advantages or disadvantages of certain jurisdictions.

If Ontario is going to continue to grow and to remain strong and prosperous, we have to be very cognizant of what has been happening around us. So we have five strategies in mind for future success. We're going to continue on the plan of lowering personal income tax because we know that creates high domestic demand and boosts incentive for creativity and hard work. When people have money in their pockets they will spend it, they will invest it, they will save it, and hopefully that will make Ontario grow. We are going to lower corporate

income taxes to attain and retain those globally mobile investments I was speaking about. We are going to do everything we can to encourage innovation and small business entrepreneurship. We are going to invest heavily in our provincial infrastructure, whether it be highways or telecommunications. We are going to continue to ensure that fiscal balance and attacking the debt is a priority for this government.

I heard my colleagues across the way speak a great deal about corporate tax cuts as though they were a very bad thing. I think it's important for people to understand how mobile companies are. One of the countries most recently in the news has been the small country of Ireland. They have had a very significant economic turnaround in the last while. They've done a number of things, but one of the key things that they have done to build their very phenomenal success has been to lower their corporate income tax rate. Corporate income tax rates are quite varied. I have an interesting chart here. They range anywhere from 24% in Ireland to, interestingly enough, in Ontario in 1999, before this legislation hopefully passes, 44.6%, almost double. This is a tremendous difference, and this does not encourage investments to come to this province. Countries like Norway, the United Kingdom, Korea, Denmark, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Australia, France, the US and Japan all are ahead of us. If we want the opportunities and growth and prosperity for our children, for our students who are now working to be excellent in their field, we have to be very cognizant of that. That is why you are seeing our government making a very bold move in this budget through this act to lower the corporate income tax rate.

What we are specifically planning to do is to cut the general corporate income tax rate immediately by 1% to 14.5% and decline that right down to 8% when fully implemented in 2005. In addition to that, the manufacturing and processing rate will be cut immediately by 1% to 12.5%, also declining to 8% when fully implemented in 2005. As well, not forgetting that the majority of our growth here in Ontario, actually 80% of the growth, has been due to domestic demand—and I would challenge my colleague across the way and say that tax cuts have played a key part in this activity—we are also going to cut the small business rate immediately by 1% to 7%, also declining to 4% when fully implemented in 2005.

What we are doing here is making a very strategic investment in long-term investment. We are sending very clear signals to decision-makers all around the world that Ontario not only is open for business but wants their business and is going to make very bold movements to make sure their business comes here. That means opportunities, make no mistake.

The other thing that is very predominant in this particular bill is again an emphasis on personal income tax. When we were elected in 1995, we said we were going to cut personal income taxes by 30%, and a lot of people were shocked by that because it's very unusual for

governments to reduce personal income tax or reduce taxes in general. We did it; we did it ahead of time. We promised in 1999 that we would reduce personal income taxes by a further 20%. In this budget we're continuing to move forward with that, in fact again ahead of time. So Ontario's lowest income tax rate will be cut by 5% to 6.2% effective July 1, 2000; the middle income tax rate is going to be cut by 9.4% effective also on July 1. To my colleague across the way, the first \$100,000 of taxable employee benefits arising from designated stock options and capital gains granted by eligible research and development firms would also be exempt.

My colleague across the way who was talking about it being "obscene," I think was the word he used, obviously mustn't know what's happening around him. My son Daniel goes to the University of Waterloo, and he's in a program of science and business. At the University of Waterloo, perhaps my colleague across the way doesn't realize that Bill Gates from Microsoft sends up teams of people on a regular basis to headhunt the brightest and the best. They go down to Washington state just as quickly as they're picked, and they are encouraged and coaxed to be part of an American team—And it's not just Bill Gates; it's so many other companies, because they know we have bright students. They are looking for the finest minds.

As a government, we have an obligation to find ways to make it attractive for those young people to stay here in our communities. If they are part of a new and innovative company and that company can help get up and running through stock options to employees, that is exactly the right thing to do, and I believe our government is very wise in encouraging this sort of thing.

These are the kinds of companies that are going to build the jobs of the future here in this province and across Canada. Ontario, being the vibrant economy that it is, must rely on these kinds of individuals. Tax rates are an important decision. We can't compete with the US when it comes to weather, make no mistake, particularly states like California. We have to find ways to keep these people here so they will make our economy grow.

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Time is limited and I want to share my time with my colleague from across the way. There are just a few other things that jumped out at me. There are so many more things to talk about, but there are a few little things in the budget that we've hardly heard anything about. For instance, this bill makes an exemption of retail sales tax for gifts to schools, colleges and universities. The 5% tax payable on automobile insurance premiums will be reduced to zero. The land transfer tax will no longer have a limitation on time for first-time homebuyers. That tax, on a newly constructed home, will be removed.

This is a very important one to many constituents in my riding: The annual Ontario child care supplement for working families available to single parents is going to be increased by \$210 for each child under seven years of age, beginning July 1. We're helping families that really need help.

Qualifying environmental trusts, for instance, that currently pay income tax will see that reduced.

The last point, the taxpayer dividend that will be returned to any Ontario resident who has paid \$200 in taxes, is going to be implemented as a result of this bill. I've heard so many people dismiss this dividend as a giveaway, as a political plum, as a crass ploy to gain support. I look at it in this way: Ontario is made up of a lot of people who dearly love this province and are proud of the contributions they make. If you think of it in terms of a large group of people working together, shoulder to shoulder in terms of business, when that enterprise is doing well, they need to feel some sense of specific benefit from that. This is the first time, in my memory at any rate, that a government has actually given people back some of their own money. That's the key.

Whether you want to invest that in your local school, whether you want to donate it to the hospital, whether you want to invest it, whether you want to spend it in someone's enterprise, you're reinvesting that in Ontario, and you get to choose. Obviously, taxpayers choose how their governments are going to spend their money for the most part when they make an election. In the case of the former government, we paid a heavy price for that by having the debt doubled in four years, and it's been quite a struggle to get that under control.

For the first time we're going to give Ontarians an opportunity to make some very clear decisions on how to spend that dividend, just as we have done with all the tax cuts they've received over the past four years that have created those 703,000 jobs.

This is a wonderful bill. It will enact the suggestions in the budget. I'm more than pleased to support it and I encourage all members of the House to do so.

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I'm pleased to join in this debate on the budget, and I'll focus my discussion on the Taxpayer Dividend Act. But before I go into it I'd like to indicate that this is the first time I have seen any government introducing balanced budget legislation. Probably the government, if they had rushed into it, would have been able to introduce it before the election and get some credit for it during the election. Probably other governments that rushed into that kind of mode tried to indicate that they balanced the budget before an election and later on it was found out that their budget was not balanced.

Had our government, for example, before the election handed out \$200 to every taxpayer in Ontario it would have been criticized as buying votes. We didn't do it before the election. We're doing it after the election because it's being done as a matter of principle and as a matter of something we feel the taxpayers deserve—a break. They are being overtaxed and that's why it's being done.

Out of all the tax cuts—there are 67 proposed tax cuts for the 2000 budget—the Taxpayer Dividend Act, the \$200 rebate to taxpayers, is the only one that applies to everyone, all taxpayers of Ontario. Even people who paid only \$200 in tax will get that \$200 back, and if you paid less than \$200, you will get back whatever you paid.

I support this dividend and believe that this rebate will be of benefit not only to individual working men and women in Ontario but also to the province. Tax cuts have been shown to be beneficial in terms of a stronger economy and jobs in Ontario. The lowering of personal income tax is part of a larger strategy that all governments have employed in order to reverse the trend of decreasing GDP, which this province had been experiencing in the period from 1988 to 1995. Increased incentives for productivity, creativity and domestic demand have followed the lowering of personal income tax.

The turnaround this province has experienced in terms of job creation since 1995 can be attributed in part to Ontario's tax policy changes. In the late 1980s and early 1990s Ontarians were experiencing increased taxes at considerably higher rates than anywhere else in Canada. We know that revenue decreased, as did the spirit and morale of hard-working people who felt that rates were unconscionable. This resulted in fewer people working, fewer jobs and fewer people paying taxes. Since 1995 the Ontario economy has created over 700,000 new jobs and reversed the plaguing trend of unemployment that by no coincidence coincided with the increases in tax rates by previous governments. With our decrease in tax rates, the job rate increased.

The Ontario government's tax cuts have restored confidence in our economy, resulting in the Ontario economy being the leading growing economy anywhere in Canada. Since this government began cutting taxes, real disposable incomes of Ontarians have increased 11.6%, more than double the 5.7% growth experienced in the rest of Canada. So when you talk about the booming economy mainly depending on the American economy, I don't know how you can explain that the increase in Ontario is double the growth experienced in the rest of Canada.

The introduction of the tax dividend, put simply, will translate into more money in people's pockets, and this is in everyone's pockets. It's in the pockets of a factory worker, a construction worker, whether you are a cleaner or a struggling student. These are all things I have been in the past. Mr Speaker, you will notice that you will be getting this \$200 in your pocket, and I'm sure the people getting it will be putting it to good use.

Personal income tax cuts have in the past have both boosted spending and have been an incentive to work hard and to earn more money. This promotes entrepreneurial initiative and translates into a stronger supply and consumer demand and a more dynamic economy.

It's very difficult to stand here and always hear people against every policy of the government. There are things the government can be criticized for. For example, I think a member across the floor referred to the problem with housing, which is something our government has to deal with and is trying to deal with. There is a problem with homeless people, and that's something our government has to keep working at. But when you criticize the Taxpayer Dividend Act, when you criticize returning

money to the people who paid it, I think that goes beyond what should be taking place in this House. I hope people will see that that's not a genuine criticism.

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The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'd like to help the member from Mississauga East out on the mystery of why the opposition isn't as effusive in its praise of the government as possible. There are two basic reasons. One is, that's why you have government members. All government members have a third hand to pat themselves on the back, no matter who the government is; government members have a third hand to pat themselves on the back. When, for instance, a local radio station or newspaper contacts Bart Maves, the member for Niagara Falls, and I, he's going to give the government position and there's a recognition that I will give the opposition position. Now, he may concede some small point the opposition has. I may concede some small point in a budget that I think is good. But basically, our role—and it's unfortunate, but in a partisan House our role is to give our point of view. So that's the mystery there.

The second reason is that as soon as you praise the government, you read it in government pamphlets after. First of all, the whiz kids back there take note of it and then the member for Willowdale gets up and reads that I've praised the government on some issue. That's difficult, you see, when that happens. Second, I remember that Morley Kells, my good friend from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, in one of his constituency newsletters quoted some great things I said about him. I would still say them today, whether he's going to quote them or not, because I have an admiration for Mr Kells and he's a popular member of the Legislature. Even now, he is even more popular, and he's written some excellent articles for the Toronto Star from time to time talking about the hierarchy of the Harris administration.

That is why we're not as effusive with the praise. We know that you will compliment the government on all aspects of the budget. We understand that and accept that. I hope that you will understand that we in the opposition may find something that we don't entirely agree with in the budget from time to time. When I deliver my speech a little later on, don't wait too long in the House for me to be very effusive in my praise of the government budget.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): The member for Guelph-Wellington said that there are some people who have criticized the \$200 tax dividend of the government, referring to it as being a cynical exercise. In fact, the majority of people are criticizing the government for that.

I just want to scan some of the comments that have been appearing in newspapers as people have been writing in on their own, letters to the editor.

Leslie Etienne said, "It should have been spent elsewhere, especially in health care."

Michael Stewart said, "What they should have done is spent the money to prevent tuition fees from going up."

Moir Carriere said, "I'll probably put it towards my student loan, but I really think it should be put toward education and health care."

Will Bohm said: "In my view, Ernie Eves' budget gave us an example of pure political cynicism.... How many of the poor hit with a 22% cut in welfare benefits will be getting a tax dividend cheque?... How will the tax dividend, even at the maximum \$200, help seniors recoup their losses when the Tories imposed user fees ... on prescription drugs?"

Jim and Chris Griffin said: "The \$200 rebate coming from the Harris government shows utter contempt towards the electorate. In the government's view we will overlook its continued cutbacks and attacks on our social system—from health care and education to social services."

Leonard Desroches said: "Briefly put, I do not have a large income. Yet even I recognize that the \$200 cheque being given back to me (without my consultation) by the Ontario Conservative government does not go very far in my own personal finances. I also know that collectively that money would go far in offering support structures for the most vulnerable in our culture."

Letter after letter after letter criticizing the government, saying the collective power of the billion dollars could do so much good.

Douglas Graydon: "Shame on Mike Harris! What a cheap buyoff: \$200 per taxpayer, millions in total! It's enough to end homelessness; enough to feed all of the hungry."

Anne McEwen said, "Sorry, Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. You're not buying my vote."

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I want to congratulate the member from Guelph and Mr DeFaria, the member for Mississauga East, on their comments. I also commend the member from St Catharines, who gave a very good explanation of the opposition's role in the parliamentary process. By and large, I largely accept that role.

I would like to point out in terms of tax cuts that Mike Harris did take a very bold initiative with cutting taxes while at the same time reducing spending and trying to balance the budget, and all of that would increase jobs. We've led the G7 nations in economic growth, in job growth. We've led the United States the last few years in economic growth. We've led the country of Canada in economic growth—every single province. It has very much paid off.

Tax cuts now are the rule rather than the exception. You have to understand that Mike Harris has totally changed the way governments are looking at budgets. It used to be that everyone would hold on to their wallet at budget time. There'd be a new tax. It would always happen—whatever the stripe of the government, by the way. Now what's happening is that even, I noted in the newspaper, "NDP Cuts Taxes by \$102 million in Manitoba." That's right. The Manitoba NDP government

tabled its first budget yesterday, offering \$102 million in personal tax cuts.

The article goes on to talk about how traditional supporters of the New Democrats were quick to decry the budget. These were the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, the Manitoba Federation of Labour, Choices—A Coalition for Social Justice, and on and on, similar to the groups that decry tax cuts in Ontario. I think they need to come out of the Dark Ages. I commend the Manitoba NDP for cutting taxes, like the Saskatchewan NDP did before them. I commend them for following Mike Harris's instructional moves here in Ontario.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell) : Je peux comprendre pourquoi la députée de Guelph-Wellington doit parler en faveur du contenu total de ce projet de loi. C'est bien simple. Si elle ne parlait pas en faveur, elle ne pourrait pas détenir les positions qu'elle a avec le gouvernement.

Mais il faut dire que le gouvernement, lorsqu'il a fait l'annonce sur le projet de loi 72, a donné les grandes lignes ; il n'est pas entré dans les détails, tous les gens ont été sous l'impression, comme dans le point de la loi sur les droits de cession immobilière. C'est seulement la première fois que la maison est vendue ou l'établissement est vendu ; le "first-time buyer", c'est seulement sur des nouvelles propriétés.

Nous regardons aussi la réduction d'impôt personnel, qui va coûter aux payeurs de taxes au-delà de 4,5 \$ milliards. Lorsque nous parlons aux grosses compagnies, aux corporations, ils nous disent, « Mais pourquoi n'avons-nous pas appliqué l'argent, ces montants-là, vers la dette ? » Les gens d'affaires reconnaissent l'importance de réduire la dette accumulée, qui est au-delà de 114 \$ milliards. Depuis l'élection du gouvernement actuel, nous avons fait augmenter la dette de 24 \$ milliards. Le seul gouvernement qui était capable de balancer son budget dans les derniers 10 ans est bel et bien le gouvernement libéral sous la direction de David Peterson, dont nous avons fini un an record, cette année-là, avec \$ 90 millions de surplus. Même si ce gouvernement-ci ne voulait pas le mentionner, en tout cas nous disant que ce n'était pas le cas, cette fois-ci dans le budget de la province nous avons bel et bien vu que le gouvernement Peterson avait fini avec un surplus de \$ 90 millions.

Mais une partie qu'ils auraient dû regarder, c'est les soins à domicile. Dans le secteur rural, nous avons procédé à des coupures d'au-delà de 50 % dans les soins à domicile.

J'aimerais bien continuer à parler sur ce point, mais je crois que mon temps est maintenant terminé. Je vous en remercie.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Response?

Mrs Elliott: I'm very pleased to respond to and thank my colleagues from Mississauga East, St Catharines, Beaches-East York, Niagara Falls and Glengarry-Prescott-Russell for their comments.

I sit in this House day after day and I listen to my colleagues across the way. It doesn't seem to matter what we do on this side of this House; it's wrong. I'm one of those people who came here in 1995 because I was out of government, I was in small business, and I saw first-hand the horrible effects of unconscionable deficits being run up year after year. I think the last one under the NDP was \$11.3 billion. I want everybody at home to understand that a deficit is what you spend more than you have, and at the end of the year it becomes debt. Folks, the debt that's out there wasn't created by this government. We're trying to manage it and get a handle on it, and I find it just incomprehensible how my colleagues across the way conveniently forget that they were the architects, for the most part, of the problem we've been struggling with.

My colleague over here criticized us because we were slow to work on the debt. She contrasted us with Saskatchewan, that we were way, way far behind the eight ball as compared to Saskatchewan. And they forget the other key thing. We've been struggling through a very balanced approach to get our deficit under control, to begin to pay down the debt, but we've also been very cognizant that if we had immediately gone from \$11.3 billion annual deficit down to zero within, say, a year, we would have put Ontario's economy into a real tailspin, and that would have been a disaster. We have done it methodically. We have done it through measured approaches, more of which you're seeing in this budget today, and we created in the process a climate that created 703,000 jobs. That's hope and opportunity for Ontario, and I'm very proud to be a part of the government.

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Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I am delighted to have an opportunity this afternoon to speak to Bill 72, the budget bill. This gives me an opportunity to address the Ontario budget for the year 2000. I want to, perhaps in a more ecumenical spirit than some of my colleagues on this side of the aisle, observe that these are indeed very good times, and the budget presented by our friend from Parry Sound-Muskoka 10 days ago reflects that. It was an extraordinary presentation that the Minister of Finance laid before the assembly and before the province at 4 o'clock on May 2.

The budget, like all budgets, is replete with statistical data. I thought the most telling statistic in the 2000 Ontario budget was the statistic early in the presentation that in the fiscal year 1999-2000, the Ontario government's revenues were up \$5.3 billion above projections. Let me repeat that: The Treasurer told us on May 2 when he presented the 2000 budget that in the year just ended March 31, our revenues were \$5.3 billion above projections. Who could not sing a Te Deum of praise to that kind of good news? I can't remember a time when previous finance minister was able to report such dramatically improved revenue as was the case on May 2.

I looked at the budget papers and I was struck by not just the revenue line—and it is extraordinary, absolutely extraordinary, how robust are the revenues, and I'm not

going to argue that Her Majesty's provincial government ought not to get some credit for that. The last time revenues were even remotely this good was at a time 12 or 14 years ago when it was my pleasure to serve in the then Peterson government. I don't believe that our revenues were ever quite as good as the revenues reported for the fiscal year just ended March 31, but I can tell you from having been there, particularly in 1986, 1987 and 1988, that we had some very good times with respect to revenue growth. It is true, as has been observed by several people in the New Democratic and particularly in the current Conservative caucus, that the Peterson government spent money very liberally. Looking back a decade, it's quite clear and it is a fair criticism for members of this assembly and the general public to say that the Peterson government spent too liberally in light of what was just around the corner. That is, in my view, a fair criticism.

But let us look at the spending that is presented in this budget. I want to just take a moment to turn to Budget Paper B contained in the minister's presentation. I want to observe something, based on government data, that I think would be, as they would say in Mississauga South, counterintuitive, because the brand that Mike Harris has been able to effect with great impact is not just as a tax cutter but as a program cutter.

It is very interesting, if you look at pages 56 and 57 of Budget Paper B, the Ten-Year Review of Selected Financial and Economic Statistics. If you look at the line for program expenditures—and I'm just interested in program expenditures—what do we find? We find that in the five-year period between 1991 and 1995, the Rae government saw program spending increase by \$2.5 billion, approximately, from \$43.6 billion to \$46.16 billion. That's an increase, by my quick calculation, over that four- or five-year period, of \$2.5 billion in program spending. If I look at the Harris period from 1996 to 2000, I see program spending going up from \$45 billion to \$49.5 billion. Isn't it remarkable that the Harris government will have, in that four- or five-year period, increased program spending by almost double what the Rae government increased spending by, according to this chart? And it is quite clear that this current Ontario government, despite its branding, despite its rhetoric, is very much a spending government. I repeat, program spending in the period from 1996-97 has gone from \$45 billion to \$49.5 billion, an increase of \$4.5 billion.

I just wanted to make that observation, because the night before the budget was presented I happened to be in the library reading the Wall Street Journal, and I was struck by an editorial in the Monday, May 1, edition of the Wall Street Journal. In it there was an editorial entitled "State Spending Machine." The Wall Street Journal, not exactly a Liberal journal, was observing that these are truly the best of times in America. In the United States, according to the Wall Street Journal—and it's very bipartisan; in fact the Republicans appear to be more guilty of this than the Democrats—whether it's Pataki in New York, Thompson in Wisconsin, Engler in Michigan,

Ridge in Pennsylvania, Leavitt in Utah or Hull in Arizona, boy, are they spending money. Year over year, spending is up by 7%, 8%, 9%. Why is it possible? The journal observes, as did the New York Times a couple of weeks earlier in a front-page story entitled "A Resurgent Michigan Leads Newly Flush State"—it goes on to talk about what's going on in Michigan. There's so much money coming in—

Mr Hastings: The low tax disease.

Mr Conway: My friend from Etobicoke says, "The low tax disease." I'm not here to quarrel with that in the short term because, in this case quoting Gary Olsen, the director of Michigan's non-partisan Senate fiscal agency: "It's an ideal situation. Michigan has never been able to reduce taxes and raise spending at the same time."

I'm not here to complain. I am not going to be some nattering nabob of predictable opposition politics. As I say, who could curse the sunshine, this kind of sunshine? I repeat, our friend from Parry Sound told us revenues were up \$5.3 billion over plan. If you go to Charlie MacNaughton—well, Charlie MacNaughton is no longer with us. You can't find a treasurer in Ontario's history, I think, who has ever had such a cornucopia with which to deal and from which he could distribute largesse.

I also make the observation, and I'd make the point again: Spend? Boy, I would be interested to see the Wall Street Journal's observation of the Harris budget, because there's much more here in terms of spending than there is in terms of debt retirement. It is hard to imagine that this is not the mountaintop. I hope I'm wrong. I can't imagine that when we look back from a vantage point 10 years hence, we're not going to say, "You know, 1998, 1999, 2000—boy, that was good." In the fourth quarter of 1999, the US economy grew by 7.1%. That is phenomenal. It is unprecedented. We are told by the economic think-tanks that in 1989 the Ontario GDP derived something like 29% of itself, its benefit, from our trade with America. Ten years later, fully 54% of Ontario's GDP relates to international trade, for which you can read, for purposes of this equation, "American trade."

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Let me repeat those numbers. In 1989 Ontario's GDP was 29% dependent on our trade outside of Canada, mostly with the United States; 10 years later, that figure's gone from 29% to 54%. I say to my friend from Mississauga who spoke earlier, I'm not here to say that all of the benefit derives from our American trading relationship, but any fair-minded person would have to conclude, looking at those numbers, that our relationship with America has a lot to do with the vibrant health of the American economy.

Why is British Columbia having relatively less success? Obviously there are some issues in terms of their domestic politics, but let's not be unfair. When we were in the tank seven and eight years ago, British Columbia was riding a crest. Why? Because their regional and provincial economy is tied to the Asian tiger. Eight and nine years ago the Asian tiger was roaring. The Asian tiger has had a very protracted case of the flu and eco-

nomie pneumonia that seems to be coming to something of an end.

Mr Maves: BC was in decline before Japan.

Mr Conway: I just say to my friend from Niagara Falls, he might want to go back and actually look at the reality. But I make the point that these are phenomenal times for Ontario. I hope they continue. I hope there are no black clouds on the horizon. I'm happy to see the Minister of Correctional Services here, the former investment banker of considerable renown, because when I look at the horizon, quite frankly I see reason to be fairly optimistic.

But there is one cloud on the horizon, for which Her Majesty's provincial government has very substantial responsibility that I think portends very real difficulty. It's called Hydro. I hope I'm wrong. I hope what I'm hearing from big and small business is absolutely misdirected, but I keep hearing from big, medium and small-sized business that they are being told, in some cases by Ontario Hydro's successor company in the generation business, that rates are about to go up 10%, 15% and 20% when the market opens this November, if it indeed opens in November.

Let me tell you, if that happens, we are certainly going to be in for some interesting times. Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, who are the architects of the current electricity deregulation, as set out and passed in Bill 35, will have a very important accounting to give to millions of residential, farm, business, commercial and industrial electricity consumers in this province. I repeat: As recently as last night, I was told by some of the biggest industrial electricity consumers in Ontario that their rates, they are being told by people in the know, are to go up by anywhere from 10% to 20% almost immediately upon the market opening up this fall.

I'm quickly using up my time. There are a couple of things I wanted to mention very quickly. One of them has to do with gasoline revenues. I noticed shortly after the budget that the Canadian Automobile Association, in its very helpful way, reminded us—and to be fair to them, they gave credit to the government for reducing or eliminating a couple of motorist-related taxes and fees, and I support the government in that. I am reminded by the CAA that when you look at the 2000 Ontario budget we are accordingly going to take in, in terms of road-related revenues, gasoline tax, diesel tax and vehicle and driver licensing fees in this fiscal year, \$3.84 billion. If you just take the gasoline tax alone, we're going to be taking in \$2.26 billion. The Minister of Transportation beats his breast proudly and says, "And we are spending \$1 billion on highway improvements." Good. Where is the other 60% of the gasoline tax revenue? On behalf of my rural constituents, who don't have the TTC, who don't have OC Transpo, who don't have any kind of public transit, they know that fully 20% of what they pay on a per-litre charge for gasoline is a provincial gasoline tax.

I find it interesting that we're willing to cut corporate taxes of all sorts, we're interested in cutting income tax

rates, but we are not, in this large and diverse province, even willing to think about cutting the gasoline tax, and we are using over 50% of its revenue to support non-transportation-related programs. Isn't that an interesting tax policy? You tax geography to pay for general programs. On behalf of people who live in places like Wilno and La Passe and Bissett Creek and Calabogie and Griffith, I stand here as their member to say they don't consider this fair and just. If there is to be a gasoline tax, they're willing to pay it, but they want to see the vast majority of those monies applied to road improvements or transportation improvements.

Mr Maves: They are.

Mr Conway: They're not. I'm saying to my friend from Niagara Falls, your own budget is what I'm using as my database. I agree \$1 billion is a lot of money. It represents 40% of what you're taking in on the gas tax and I'm not even counting the diesel tax or the registration fee income.

A final word, because my time is running down, has to do with education. I see in the budget that we're going to be spending more money on early childhood initiatives and I say, with Mrs Marland present, I support that. I bet you we are reinstating cuts made some years ago to those initiatives, but that might be a little indelicate of me to suggest. But I have to say there is much else going on in education that troubles me deeply.

I see in the most recent initiatives announced this week more and more concentration of power here at Queen's Park, in the Mowat Block at head office central, and less and less real decision-making being allowed to local communities and local school boards. Apparently 900 Bay Street knows more and knows better how to deliver these programs in Emo in the Rainy River district, in Vankleek Hill down in Prescott-Russell, up in Pembroke in the Ottawa Valley, or in many other communities I could mention. This week's announcements represent yet more concentration of decision-making in our educational programming and policy-making in this province at 900 Bay Street at the Ministry of Education, and that troubles me deeply.

Even more concerning is that the war continues. Mike Harris is apparently not happy unless he is fighting with and attacking the teachers. I know the neo-conservative politics where you have to have an enemy—cops are good, teachers are bad; business is good, people on social assistance are bad—and we must be constantly at war with our enemy. Well, amidst this cornucopia, amidst this prosperity, and given the first-order importance of what education will mean to our economic future and our social well-being, I submit to the Premier that this is madness and that this is truly counterproductive. How do we suppose that we are going to get the kind of curriculum improvement, the kind of other initiatives we all want if we constantly attack the whole teaching profession, all 120,000 at the elementary and secondary levels?

Mandatory volunteerism: Oh, it makes for a good headline and it will certainly appeal to a certain core

constituency that obviously has to be appealed to for the neo-conservative diet of the day. But I tell you that what Premier Mike Harris is doing to and saying about our schoolteachers is despicable, and more importantly, it is going to set back the cause that I believe every member in this Legislature would want to see accomplished.

1700

I'm going to just conclude with this observation. I'm concluding a new biography about Abraham Lincoln, and I was thinking last night as I was reading of Lincoln's second inaugural. He's speaking a month before his own martyrdom. He's speaking to a bloody and broken country, and what does he say? Those famous words: "With malice toward none, with charity for all let us go forward to build a better world."

Well, I say to Mike Harris, you would do well to go and think about what you're doing and what you're saying to the teachers of Ontario and the destructive and negative impact that will have on the objective that I believe we all share in this Legislature—a better educational program for the 1.5 million students who go to school in publicly funded education in Ontario today.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With regard to my request for a late show under standing order 37(a), although I still disagree with the answer, my instinct tells me that I should withdraw it.

The Speaker: I thank the member for informing us and letting us know. Questions and comments?

Ms Lankin: I had the opportunity—I was in the members' gallery at the back here—to listen to the member from Renfrew. I've said this on a number of occasions in this Legislature: I am always tremendously moved by his passion, his conviction, and always impressed by his oratorical skills and the parliamentarian that he is. I wish there were more of us among the ranks who understood the history of this place and understood the importance that this place should play in debate of major public policy, such as the government's current budget and the direction they have chosen to take.

While I was out there I was making a phone call to a family in Peterborough. It was a very disturbing call. This is a family with a medically fragile child who are just at this point in time beyond being able to hold it together any more. The support they receive in terms of nursing care through the community care access centre, together with special services at home from Community and Social Services, leaves them without enough support even to have a six-hour period of time at night to sleep. One of them must be up every night all night long with the child. They can't get the hours they need, they can't get the support they need.

They worry about their other child, their three-year-old—this is a year-and-a-half-old baby who is so very ill—and being able to provide a normal family life and support, and the stress that's on the family, a family that, like so many others in this province, is struggling.

We were just talking about the \$200 tax dividend and how the cumulative amount of that of \$1 billion could provide the services for the 2,000 families on waiting

lists to receive the services for medically fragile children, and so much else. I appreciate the member's contribution and I support what he has to say. I wish the government would listen.

Mr Maves: It's a pleasure to rise and respond to the member opposite. He challenged us to look at pages 56 and 57, and I did that with him. Right off the bat, he talked about how the minister's budget comments were that the revenue projections were \$5.3 billion above what we had projected earlier in the year. Why? What were the reasons for that? Let's talk about that. First of all, this government has had a practice from the beginning of having conservative economic predictions about economic growth and also about tax revenues; also about deficit reduction. We've exceeded those almost every year, and that shouldn't be a surprise to him.

Second, why do we have extra revenues? Because of the phenomenal economic growth in Ontario. What has led to that economic growth? Consumption, consumer spending in the province of Ontario was in the dumps for many years. We gave money back to people. Consumer spending has led a great deal of the economic growth in Ontario. As a result of that—more people working, more people paying taxes, less money going out in social programs—it brings in more revenues.

Furthermore, economic reform: We froze hydro rates. They had gone up 11% in consecutive years under the NDP. We reduced WCB rate premiums by 20% on average. We reduced property taxes, personal income taxes, the employer health tax. Labour law reform. As a result, what happened? Businesses invested dramatically in this province: an 80% increase in business investment, new capital stock, which means new plants, new jobs, more people paying taxes. Revenues are up.

What have we done with those revenues? He chastised us because our expenditures are up. Where did the money go? Health care. Almost all the \$5.7 billion in extra revenues went into health care. That's what the Liberals say they support. That's where we put the money; that's what we supported.

Mr. Lalonde : Il est toujours intéressant d'écouter mon collègue le député de Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, surtout lorsqu'il vient le temps de défendre les intérêts des Ontariens et des Ontariennes. Il a bien mentionné aussi que l'autre député du parti au pouvoir vient de mentionner que la raison d'être d'avoir de la production où nos revenus ont été plus élevés que prévus, c'était bien simple, taux d'intérêt, et on devrait dire merci au gouvernement fédéral d'avoir gardé notre taux d'intérêt aussi bas qu'il est aujourd'hui—aussi le taux d'échange, mais je me rappelle que le premier ministre a toujours dit qu'il faudrait regarder à augmenter la valeur de notre argent. Chaque fois que nous allons monter d'un sou, ça représente plusieurs milliards de dollars en revenus au Canada.

Je voudrais surtout toucher le point des 200 \$ que les citoyens et citoyennes, les payeurs de taxes, doivent recevoir. Il ne faudra pas influencer le public dans l'erreur que c'est jusqu'à un maximum de 200 \$. Mais la

chose dont j'ai bien peur dans tout ça, la chose qui m'épeure un peu, c'est que lorsqu'on va faire parvenir cet argent-là, peut-être 25 \$, peut-être \$ 35, peut-être qu'il sera accompagné par une lettre qui va inviter les gens recevant ce montant de 25 \$ et un peu plus, qui va demander aux citoyennes et citoyens s'ils veulent adhérer au Parti conservateur de l'Ontario. Nous avons vu cette tactique dans le passé, et j'espère que cette fois-ci quelqu'un va regarder ça de très près avant de faire parvenir ces chèques.

Il est facile de balancer un budget. J'aurais pu faire la même chose lorsque j'ai été maire d'une municipalité. Nous n'avions qu'à vendre des propriétés pour essayer de balancer notre budget. Mais à la longue, c'est la jeunesse de demain qui va payer la note, puisque nous devons racheter ces propriétés, ce qui va coûter beaucoup plus cher à nos jeunes de demain.

Mr Young: As one who has been in this assembly for a relatively short period of time, I certainly want to comment upon the fact that the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has skills and talents that many of us would be served well to emulate. I do appreciate not only the manner in which he presented his arguments this afternoon but also, at least for the first portion thereof, the non-partisan approach that he attempted to take. I think he deviated from that as time went on, but I do appreciate the fact that he invited us to look at history, and I think that is always a worthwhile endeavour. He invited us to look at history and to consider not only the actions of the government in which he had the privilege to be a minister but also prior and subsequent governments.

I will accept that challenge in the brief time I have here today. As the member for St Catharines indicated earlier, I do on occasion look back and look at what the media had to say. That is one way of measuring reactions of people in this assembly. I have looked back and I looked at an article that was in the Toronto Star on April 25, 1990, authored by Thomas Walkom. Thomas Walkom at that juncture was commenting on the budget that was tabled by Mr Nixon, who was the Treasurer under Mr Peterson, the last Liberal Premier of this province.

He said the following: "In 1986," so he was reflecting back, "for instance, the government promised"—this is the Liberal government—"850 million for new hospital beds. After the Liberals won the 1987 election, the beds were scrapped." That was most unfortunate then. "Promises made, promises kept" is a credo that this side of the Legislature has abided by, and I think that was undoubtedly in the minds of the voters when they cast their ballots in 1995 and 1999.

1710

Mr Conway: I can tell you what's on the minds of voters of 1999 in Pembroke who now look at a closed Pembroke Civic Hospital. Look at an analysis done by the Harris government that said, "You can close the one hospital and renovate the other one for \$5 million bucks," and find out now, two years later, that the \$5-million

renovation bill is \$24 million. I'm not going to talk about the similar stories in Kingston and Sudbury and Samia. I'm not saying there weren't some tough decisions to be made, but let me just make the point. Hospital restructuring costs, we are told now by the auditor, are minimally going to be \$2 billion or \$3 billion above the estimate. And we haven't really started to spend those monies yet. There have been some allocations but, let me tell you, we've got sins for which atonement is due, let me be the first to admit.

I'm not complaining about some of the spending. I'm a Liberal. I say honestly, if I were a Tory looking at this budget, I'd say, "It may be the best year of a quarter century." With \$5.5 billion of excess revenue and a government that ran up another \$20 billion of debt, for whatever good reason, in the last four years, how much was paid down against that debt? If I were a Tory, I might say that \$500 million or \$900 million is a pittance.

My final observation would be simply this: If you had Frank Miller or Darcy McKeough or Floyd Laughren in this room, they would tell you that the hemorrhage comes when you don't have excess revenue by the billions or the hundreds of millions; it's when revenues collapse, for reasons that often have nothing to do with you. Then what? I hope I live long enough to be here to see the day—and it will happen—when the Minister of Finance is going to get up and say, "Instead of revenues being up by a couple of billion, they were down by a couple of billion." Given the new tax environment, where we've got rates, that is going to be a day when we are really going to find out something about the pain tolerance of the neo-cons.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I would like to discuss a novel concept, the concept that many in this province likely did not think they would see in their lifetime, a concept that I consider very simple but many across the way have trouble understanding.

In this debate over Bill 72, the Taxpayer Dividend Act, we've heard opposition member after opposition member tell us that giving money to taxpayers is not a good idea, that it doesn't make sense, that there are better uses for it. I can't think of a better place to have taxpayers' money than right back in taxpayers' pockets. What members opposite have so clearly failed to realize is that the money does not belong to the government, it belongs to taxpayers. Those words have been said time and time again by members on this side of the House, but it bears repeating. They are not just buzzwords or a catchy phrase; it's the truth. Government has no money of its own, only what it collects from hard-working taxpayers.

Taxpayers do work hard for their money. They work 40 hours, 50 hours, 60 hours a week, and many continue to tell us that they are still having problems making ends meet. What else are they telling us? They're saying that the past five years have finally helped to improve their lot in life. They're starting to enjoy the prosperity they should be enjoying.

I feel what this issue comes down to really is the philosophy of government. It comes down to how one treats tax dollars and it comes down to sustainability for our economic growth. To better understand, let's look back at this province under Liberal and NDP leadership when Ontarians faced 65 new and increased taxes in 10 years. We were hit with a total of \$7.5 billion in new or increased taxes under the Liberal-NDP accord in 1985. In these 10 years, personal income per capita increased by 54%. That's the good news. But the burden of provincial taxes per capita increased by 73%, more than eroding any pay increases. During that last decade, freewheeling government spending, in combination with relentless tax hikes and failed job creation schemes contributed to Ontario's fiscal crisis, which we faced on coming into office.

During the same 10-year period, government spending almost doubled, from \$29 billion to \$54 billion, and the deficit grew to an estimated over \$11 billion in the final days of the NDP. The debt more than doubled under that government, from \$42 billion to over \$100 billion by 1995. Now, after five years of hard work and sacrifice, we have finally wrested the deficit under control and are starting to pay down our debt.

What did the last decade mean for Ontario taxpayers? Quite simply, a lot of money was taken out of people's pockets. The economy slowed and consumers, businesses and investors all lost confidence. Once confidence was lost, the drag on the economy contributed to the 1990s recession. I would ask those present to contrast this with what we're seeing now: consumer confidence, jobs and a booming economy. People are off welfare. Companies want to come and invest in our province. As the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said, we are in very good times.

Our latest budget will build on this prosperity. A strong economy is no accident. It takes careful decision-making by government in order to keep the economy rolling and, perhaps more importantly, strong leadership must keep government out of the way, rather than acting as a high tax roadblock.

We've heard opposition members tell us that the government should keep the \$200 we're giving back. "Look at what you could with it," they say. "Totalled up, it's an awful lot of money," they contend. And of course it is; it's \$1 billion. It doesn't surprise me that both the Liberals and the NDP think it should be in the government's hands. We know their history. We know their philosophy. They think the government can spend taxpayers' money better than the people who have earned it in the first place can. We disagree with that. We've been down that road. We've endured crippling tax rates and double-digit unemployment. We've watched governments try to spend their way to prosperity and it doesn't work. All that's left is a mountain of debt for us and our children.

I would ask the members opposite to consider this very carefully, because keeping our economy strong is what sending \$200 back to taxpayers is all about. If you

disagree with sending back \$200 and you think government could spend it better, then what about \$400 or \$1,000 or \$10,000? If the government should keep \$200 that is not their own, where does it stop? The answer is that both opposition parties don't know where it should stop. If they had their chance again, their answer to everything is to increase taxes.

What it comes down to is choice. We see this in our society, in the choice between more consumer products; we can choose our own phone company. Today's Ontario demands choice and it demands options. I would like to acknowledge my colleague the member for Willowdale for speaking of choice the other day in discussing this bill. He said that if people don't want their \$200 back, they can let the government keep it. But by giving the money back to people, the government is giving people options. People can pay down their credit cards; donate to charity. My wife is a strong supporter of Ducks Unlimited. We support a number of organizations. I can choose to spend that money on my children. On weekends, when I get the chance, I have breakfast with my son at our local Dover Dairy Bar or the 18 Wheeler restaurant that's just up the road from my farm. It would probably be cheaper to cook the eggs at home, but I have the option to spend this on my children.

As much as it hurts the members opposite, Ontarians are tired of tax-and-spend government. They want lower taxes and they want government to stay out of their way and out of their pocketbook. For example, farmers of my riding got a big surprise this morning from the tax-and-spend Liberals in Ottawa. On the front page of a number of national newspapers today there are reports that the federal government is calling the provinces to Ottawa to discuss their proposal to jack up tobacco taxes anywhere from \$10 to \$20 a carton. This is another route we've been down before that didn't work. Yearly tobacco tax hikes were the norm under previous governments, and all they led to was increased smuggling, contraband tobacco, lower income for Ontario's farmers and essentially less money for government coffers, not more.

Needless to say, farmers in my riding are upset. They feel like they're under attack from Allan Rock and Paul Martin, under attack from tax hikes that always seem to come outside of the federal budget. After being given good news in our recent budget—personal and business tax rates going down, the deficit eliminated and new programs to boost development in rural Ontario—farmers are now being hit with terrible news from the Liberals. High taxes cost them money, it's that simple.

1720

But back to the good news; budget support from the Ontario Trucking Association, for example. I mentioned the 18 Wheeler truck stop earlier. Trucking is a very important industry in Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. Truckers haul gypsum, tobacco, steel. Companies like Laidlaw, McBurney, Verspeeten, Smith, are all involved in trucking; families like the Ronkwright family, the Slack family.

I wish to quote from the Toronto Sun:

"The Ontario Trucking Association says this week's Ontario budget contains the first reduction in road-related taxes in history."

"A balanced budget, plus the combined tax cuts and infrastructure investment commitments contained in this budget represent a landmark achievement," says OTA president, David Bradley.

OTA, the Ontario Truckers' Association "is hailing the announcement that the provincial government will be phasing out the 5% retail sales tax on automobile insurance premiums by one percentage point per year until it is finally eliminated in the year 2004.

"Also being killed is the 8% provincial sales tax on warranty repairs and replacements. It will be reduced to 6% starting this week and completely gone by the year 2004."

Just to wrap up, our government and the members opposite have very different ideas towards taxation. They believe that government, starting by keeping an extra \$200 a person and increasing this to untold levels, can be all things to all people. Our belief is different. We believe that if government takes too much taxpayers' money it should be given back, and next time the government should take less of it in the first place. This bill, Bill 72, will help make that a reality.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Caplan: I'm pleased to comment on the remarks from the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. The member makes an interesting comment about his constituents, the agricultural community. I'm from a large urban riding but I can tell you that our caucus and our members from agricultural communities received outraged comments from rural Ontarians finding out that the agricultural offices of the province of Ontario were closed. You would think that if there was going to be some help and some assistance, that all were going to benefit from prosperity, those offices would be sustained, they would be funded, they would be part of the community—a key element that is not contained in this budget. I would look for the member to comment on that to ask why he isn't standing up for his particular constituents who rely on those kinds of services and rely on agricultural offices being available, being a resource and being a support to the hard-working farmers of the province of Ontario.

I would say as well, I stand up and speak for the residents of Don Valley East, people in the city of Toronto. I know that our mayor has and I'm shocked that government members from the city of Toronto—the members from Scarborough Centre, Scarborough Southwest, Willowdale—the mayor of the city of Toronto, in fact, endorsed some of the members opposite in the last election. The mayor of the city of Toronto was very clear: This budget does nothing for the city of Toronto and I would expect that the members opposite who represent this great city would want to stand up and would want to stand shoulder to shoulder with the mayor of the city of Toronto to demand that the provincial government, the Harris government, lives up to its commit-

ment to treat the city of Toronto fairly. It is shocking that we have not had any of those kinds of admissions from members opposite.

Ms Lankin: I was interested that the member claimed that Ontarians all wanted this reduction in tax and this \$200 dividend back. I would hope that he would at least admit that there is in fact a debate out there.

Earlier today I read into the record comments of a number of individual Ontarians who'd written in to newspapers. I didn't solicit these; they were just picked from different newspaper editorial pages. A lot of people are saying there's something better we could do with the collective billion dollars and those are choices that government has to make. So perhaps you could at least admit that there are debates and that there are choices.

A billion dollars adds up. A billion dollars could kick off an innovative early years education and child care program that would be affordable and accessible to all parents. The total cost after six years of phasing in such a program would be \$4 billion. That's the exact amount of money that this government is giving away in corporate taxes.

A billion dollars could restore all but \$7 million in real per capita funding of public schools that this government has stripped from Ontario classrooms since 1995. The other \$7 million could come, by the way, with the \$3 million-plus you spent on TV ads that criticized your federal Liberal friends, and the \$3.5 million it's going to cost you to mail out the \$200 cheques to all those Ontarians.

A billion dollars could restore the cuts this government has made to hospital budgets, where you have passed the deficit on down to them and collectively they're facing \$1.8 billion in deficits.

It wouldn't even take \$1 billion for you to get back into the business of affordable housing. It would cost \$780 million to create thousands of affordable homes for homeless people.

It would only take \$600 million to expand on Ontario's home care program, to help families like the family from Peterborough I was speaking to on the phone earlier who are desperately trying to care for their medically fragile child.

These are about choices. There are people who disagree with you. Not all Ontarians agree with this approach. It is up for debate.

I really wanted the opportunity to stand and address some of the comments made by the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, because he said something there that was absolutely brilliant. He said, "A strong economy is no accident." When we had the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke go on and make his 20-minute speech, in my response I said that the economic growth we've had may be because of the fact that we were reducing taxes. It was no accident. The strong economy that we have is no accident. The member from Haldimand just hit it beautifully right on the head.

We deliberately said we would put more money back into consumers' pockets. They will spend the money and

it will make the consumption portion of our economy grow. That's what had been lagging behind for so many years in Ontario. It should be no surprise. It is no accident. Sure, there are outside elements that impact on our economy, there's no doubt of that, but about 80% of our economic growth has been attributable to consumption within the Ontario economy. That is tremendous growth.

He also talked about the Ontario Trucking Association liking the budget because we're finally giving motorists a break. It reminded me that the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke talked about gas taxes and said that the CAA and other people and motorists who talked to him want more money spent on roads, and he endorses that—the flavour of the month. A long time ago, all those gas taxes and taxes on motorists were put into general revenues and got spent on other things like health care and education. His government did it, the NDP did it and we continue to do it. If he wants us to take all that money and spend it on roads, then he's got to tell us that he wants us to take it out of health care.

I want to go on about his 15 minutes later on, because everything he said in the first 15 minutes of his speech made a mockery of everything the NDP and Liberals have said in the past four years.

Mr Bradley: I would like to deal with the theory the government has on prosperity and provide a slightly different theory on prosperity in this province. I agree with my friend from Niagara Falls that indeed it isn't an accident when you have a good economy, although Ernie Eves, when he was on television the other night, said it was partially good luck, and I suppose that's part of it. There's no question that the policies of Bill Clinton and the Democratic administration in the United States have had a major impact on Canada. By and large, the booming economy in Ontario is because of the booming economy in the United States. We export an awful lot to the United States and we're delighted to be able to do that at this time. That booming economy, the low interest rates in the United States and the consumer demand have been extremely beneficial to those of us in Ontario.

I could tell you, it was that way as well when the Liberal government was in power from 1985 to 1990; not to the same degree because there wasn't quite as much trade then, but certainly a good deal of the prosperity we experienced then was because of the United States economy doing well.

1730

Second, it's low interest rates, something we didn't have under your good friend Brian Mulroney. I know you're all strong supporters of Brian Mulroney, particularly when he had a huge increase in interest rates. That was very detrimental to the economy. There's no question about that. But we've had low interest rates now. Surely if you're going to criticize the federal government all the time, one thing you can say is that their low interest rate policy is beneficial.

Last, and this one is a bit fortunate in one respect, and that is the low dollar. There's no question that our dollar

where it is now gives us a very strong competitive advantage for the auto industry, the resource industries and many other industries, and that's to what we can attribute the prosperity in this province.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Barrett: I wish to thank the members for Don Valley East, Beaches-East York, Niagara Falls, St Catharines—different views. It's not an urban-rural issue. I am a rural member, but I have worked in downtown Toronto for 12 years, and that's much the reality for people living in rural areas.

Ms Lankin: I grew up in rural Ontario.

Mr Barrett: I appreciate that.

I wish to focus on the Liberals. When they took office in 1985, the first thing they did, with the support of their coalition NDP colleagues, was raise the maximum personal income tax rate from 48% to 50%. We see the trend, and I mentioned the federal Liberal tax hike proposed this morning in the media. Provincially, the Liberals also raised tobacco taxes in 1985, and alcohol taxes. That government began a tax-and-spend rampage that saw Ontario taxpayers gouged with 32 new and increased taxes over five years. I feel it's very important that people not forget what happened.

In 1988, the Liberals gained a majority government. They ended that partnership, and the new Liberal government's budget imposed \$1.3 billion in new tax increases—a far different philosophy, a far different approach from what we're seeing in the province of Ontario today. These increases were particularly hard on low- and middle-income earners. To ensure that the Liberal tax grab snagged everyone, they hiked the maximum personal income tax rate to 51% in 1988 and 52% in 1989. They increased the retail sales tax to 8% from 7% and its application was broadened. Gasoline taxes were increased. Alcohol and tobacco taxes were then increased again.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bradley: The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment and I had the opportunity to meet just a while ago, for an hour, with a delegation from Great Britain. The parliamentary assistant, along with the minister, is going to be able to return that visit now. I don't know whether they're going to be inviting any opposition critics, but I'm told that may be in the works. That will not temper my remarks at this time in the House.

Seriously, though, I do want to say that one of the areas I'm very disappointed in—because I am the environment critic and a former environment minister. Environment ministers, despite the fact that when we're on opposite sides of the House we have criticisms for one another, have some empathy. Having been an environment minister, I understand the need for resources and for staff; the same with the Minister of Natural Resources at the present time. I've seen their budgets cut respectively by 9% and 17%, I think, in natural resources. This is at the time of a booming economy. I'm not suggesting that this government is about drastically increasing, but I'm concerned when I see that the Minister of the Envi-

ronment of the day is asked to carry out his responsibilities with an operating budget which is about 40% less than when his government came into power and with one third of the staff gone. I know that's going to be difficult for him. I know he's going to have to put a good face on it. That's what happens when you're in government.

But I appeal to the Premier and to the Treasurer to provide more funding and resources to the Minister of the Environment so that he is able to carry out his responsibilities. I also hope they will give the environment ministry more power within government, because there are a lot of competing forces within government and I want to see the Minister of the Environment have the kind of clout necessary to elbow aside some of the others who may not be quite so environmentally inclined.

I'm here to help out the Minister of Natural Resources, as well. He needs those resources to do his job appropriately. I'm sure he would agree, though in the House now he is not nodding or anything—if he is, he's nodding off, not nodding in agreement—because he's a good cabinet team player and will make his pitch at the appropriate time within the confines of cabinet.

There's another area I want to look at. That is the whole area of taxation. I don't think there's a quarrel. The member for Niagara Falls, in one of his responses today, mentioned that governments of various political stripes today are invoking specific tax cuts. When you have a balanced budget there's justification for that, without a doubt. We face some pretty unique circumstances, however, in many provinces, certainly in Ontario, and that is the burden of a heavy debt. I guess what small-c conservatives would find wrong with this budget, or with the budgets over the last five years, is that an insufficient amount of money has gone to the retirement of the debt or keeping the debt down. During the term of office of this government, the debt of this province has increased by \$24 billion. Do I attribute that all to the fault of the government? I'm a fair-minded person. I don't. I think the government made a mistake, and I agreed with those on the government side who said, "We should invoke our tax cuts at a time when we have a balanced budget." In fact, I think the member for Oakville was one of the recommenders of that particular course of action at one time. I think that would have been prudent. I would attribute the tax cut you gave to probably \$13 billion of the accumulated \$24-billion debt. I know those of us in the opposition want to hit you with the \$24-billion figure, and we will, to simply state the debt went up by that much. But I think to the premature tax cut you could probably attribute about \$12 billion or \$13 billion. It was timing. Small-c conservatives said to me, "I don't think we should borrow to give a tax cut." Some of those people would make the same argument today, because if the government had delayed the tax cut until such time as the budget was balanced, they probably could have avoided the accumulation of \$12 billion to \$13 billion in debt.

Members of the chamber of commerce, the taxpayers' coalition and the National Citizens' Coalition, all

independent-minded organizations interested in protecting the taxpayers, have said over the years that the accumulation of the debt is important as an issue to address, and it's for this reason: It's because the first thing you have to do in a budget is pay interest on the debt. That takes a lot of money out of circulation that could either go back for tax cuts or could be applied to various government programs. So I quarrel with the timing.

The Minister of the Environment is here, and he will know I've been critical of some of the tax cuts that have happened. I remember he suggested one day, in a resolution or a bill in the House, something I thought was a good tax cut. I mention it to him because it was a tax cut which was targeted and would be directly beneficial to people. I thought that was good, and that's the approach government should take. I'm not convinced that the people who play the stock market need a lot of tax relief. I'm not convinced that the corporate sector needs as much tax relief as the government has given it. I understand you're in a competitive market. I understand you can't have corporate taxes way above everybody else's. But it's a game that's endless. We put ours down; the next jurisdiction puts its down. You have to find the funding somewhere to finance government projects and investment in the public sector. I believe the corporate sector continues to play less and less of a role in producing that revenue directly for governments. Should we drastically increase those taxes? No, of course not. But I think the government has been overly generous in its concessions to the corporate sector, something in the neighbourhood of—somebody will correct me if I'm wrong—\$5 billion being given to that corporate sector.

I also want to say that I'm concerned about public transit. One of the things the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant and I talked about with the group from Britain was the issue of public transit. I think it's important for the provincial government to get into that field and invest in public transit. It's so very important. I know the government is going to spend a lot of money on widening highways and building new highways, and there are places for those kinds of expenditures, but I think it's important to get back into such things as GO Transit. I would compliment the government if it were back in that field. I compliment Bill Davis and his government, and John Robarts, I believe it was, where GO Transit started. We had the government of Ontario investing in public transportation. First of all, it helps the environment, and second, it gets rid of some of the congestion on the roads. It's better for safety. There are a lot of factors that militate in favour of a good government investment there.

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There are areas where governments belong. Governments shouldn't build cars. Governments shouldn't be involved in other areas that the private sector is in, they way are in some countries in the world. But there are areas where the government should intervene. The protection of the environment is one and certainly health

care is another that is very important and continues to be important. I think there is going to have to be an increasing investment in the field of health care. Education is another situation, all levels of education, but post-secondary education is very important.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): And fishing.

Mr Bradley: And fishing, as well. The Minister of Natural Resources points out that fishing and fish resources are important, and they are. They're good for tourism, they're good for the natural environment and I would certainly support his desire to see an increase in that area.

Not everything in the budget is bad. As I explained previously to the member for Mississauga East, we have government members who will defend the budget, who will tell us why the budget is good, and that's a fair role for government members to play. As an opposition member, I'll concede that ground to the government, although there are, as I say, some tax changes in here, some expenditure changes that have been made with which I am in agreement. If I had the 20 minutes we used to have for speeches, or the 30 minutes even before the rules were changed before that, I would probably have time to find some areas of the budget with which I was in agreement, but the limitation of time allows me only to deal with those matters which one would expect the opposition to deal with in these circumstances.

I am concerned about what happens when a recession comes along, that there is not going to be the revenue to maintain the kind of public services we will need for the people of this province. That's why I think it's dangerous for governments at all levels to constantly be eroding those revenue sources, because when the economy is not booming, those unanticipated and additional resources are simply not there.

I was not particularly pleased with the federal budget. I must say, for that very reason. I thought that the federal budget went much heavier into tax cuts than was necessary and that we should have seen an investment elsewhere. I guess they were listening to the commercials before the budget that the Conservative Party ran, urging the federal government to cut taxes drastically. There were no advertisements asking the federal government to spend more money on health care; they came after the budget. So I would have preferred that. Given the choice, I would prefer those kinds of investments in the economy.

The last thing I want to say, because I am on my feet—I say this in a very nice way—I was disappointed that my friend Mr Klees is not in the race for the National Alliance. I would have preferred him as a candidate over Tom Long, and I'm resentful of Tom Long elbowing Frank Klees out of that race, because I think he would have been a better candidate.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Lankin: It's a pleasure to respond to the member. He mentioned, as he was talking about the reduction in corporate taxes, that he didn't think perhaps as much was

necessary. He acknowledged the need to be competitive, and I acknowledge that need too. What I would like to say to the member, having spent some time as the Minister of Economic Development and having looked at the tax competitive reports that the ministry produces on an ongoing basis, is that we are competitive as a jurisdiction, before these corporate tax cuts.

One of the things the government members never talk about is the additional things that US corporations have to pay on top of the corporate income tax; for example, health care costs, health insurance costs, which are dramatically more expensive in the US than the support for our public medicare system here.

I remember meeting with the head of Chrysler, of the international organization before it joined with Daimler, and being told that the major investments that were being made in Canadian auto in Windsor, for example, in the minivan plant, were a result of our competitive structure here. He pointed out that the cost per unit of production of a vehicle in the US contained in it about \$4,000 per unit of health care costs that they had to pay. The comparative figure here in Canada was about \$700. The members opposite never add those figures in when they're talking about competitiveness.

The other thing we haven't hear from government members—as they talk about all the additional monies and revenues and that it's all going to spending in health, for example—are the cuts that were contained in this budget.

The Minister of the Environment is here. Another 8% or 9% cut to his ministry's budget was announced in this budget. The Minister of Natural Resources is here. There was about an 18% cut to his budget. Where is the capacity to protect our natural resources and our environment? Those are things we are going to pay big for in the long run.

I say to the members opposite: You may have some good points to make, but you seem to neglect all the bad points.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): It is my pleasure to respond to the member for St Catharines. I always enjoy his speeches in the House, and he has provoked me to speak today. He mentioned my ministry, and I want to bring him up to date on a few items in the Ministry of the Environment.

First off, this year we're not going to spend \$6 million on the Y2K problem because it's been solved. There are \$2 million in relocation costs and \$1 million in salary awards from last year that aren't being covered this year. I suggest to the member for St Catharines that those are some of the dollar figures he might want to look at with respect to the Ministry of the Environment in this budget.

He also touched on a resolution I had before this House a few years ago. In fact, it was a common sense resolution and he actually supported it. That resolution was that the rebate program for first-time buyers of newly constructed homes be extended to include first-time buyers of resale homes, for people who choose to live in my community, where there isn't space to build

new homes. I hope, one day, we'll see that extended so that people can continue to live in my riding and not have to move to the 905 area.

With respect to the budget, we have over 700,000 net new jobs created in this province since September 1995 and 167 tax cuts—99 to date and 66 more included in this budget, for a total of 166 tax cuts actually.

Our philosophy on this side of the House is that we'd rather see more people paying less tax, and what the other side wants is less people paying more tax.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I am pleased to respond to my colleague from St Catharines. As I listened to his speech, he dealt with the cuts to the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Natural Resources and public transit, and framed them in the context of our strong and growing economy and the causes of that, which go well beyond what this government does, in and of itself, and stretch well beyond the boundaries of this province.

Indeed it is fair to say that our revenues have grown—there's no question about that—just as they have grown in virtually every other jurisdiction in the western world, as a result of a whole variety of things. But I'm glad my colleague reminded the government that this boom period we are experiencing—the rapid growth in government revenues has to do with the productivity of the men and women who run this economy: workers in auto plants in St Catharines and Windsor, workers in high-tech. It's a shame that the government won't take a moment, as have other governments, I might add, and give credit to those people. It's a real shame that they won't acknowledge those productivity improvements. They don't want to do that because the messaging gurus want to take all the credit for it. They don't want to give credit to the auto industry and the auto workers. They just want to talk about their tax cuts, and that's unfortunate.

When my colleague from St Catharines tells the Minister of the Environment of the cuts he has inflicted on his ministry and that his government has inflicted, I say the current Minister of the Environment should listen to what he has to say, because in my view he has demonstrated what a real Minister of the Environment can be and should be.

I'm pleased to say to my colleague: Good words, and keep them honest over there.

Mr Young: I am privileged to have an opportunity to comment on the remarks by the member for St Catharines. I will take a few of my brief moments to also comment upon the remarks by the last speaker, the member for Windsor-St Clair. I would ask, Mr Speaker, if in due course you could perhaps check out the public address system within this chamber to ensure that the voices of people on this side are heard by the people sitting on the other side, because clearly there is some problem. If the public address system was working properly and if the member for Windsor-St Clair did listen as the members on this side were speaking, he would have heard us go on at some length about the fact that we were applauding the men and women of this

province who have sacrificed a great deal to right this economy. We spent a great deal of time doing that, and I'm prepared to acknowledge yet again how important the contributions of those workers have been to this economic miracle.

I also want to talk about the member for St Catharines and the fact that he is quick at every opportunity, and today was no exception, to credit the economic boom in the United States of America for the success that occurred in this province. Of course he fails to comment on the fact that the real GDP, the growth rate in this province, far outstrips that of any of the border states, and frankly far outstrips all of the United States.

I do like the member for St Catharines. I think he's a fair parliamentarian and a good local representative. But it's puzzling to me why, when it comes to interest rates, he has credit exclusively for his federal cousins. That's the one area where he believes the United States of America and their economic and fiscal decisions have absolutely no effect on this country. With respect, I think that a balanced and fair view would appreciate that the United States does have some effect there, as they do with the economic turnaround. But it is the sound fiscal management this government has delivered that is primarily responsible.

The Speaker: Responses?

Mr Bradley: I want to thank all my colleagues for their contributions this afternoon. I found something in the budget that I agree with, because I didn't want to be totally negative. I agree with the March 31, 2000, limitation on the land transfer tax refund to first-time buyers being repealed, with a projected cost to the treasury of \$28 million. I agree with that. So I don't find everything

in the budget negative. I'm very ecumenical. I had to look through the whole budget to find something and finally found something, and with the limited time I have, I want to show how positive I can be. I'm glad you accepted the recommendation of the Liberal opposition to do this, and I congratulate you for listening on that occasion.

Again I look at my colleague the Minister of the Environment, and I understand he has to get up and say certain things about the budget. What I want to get back from him is that 40% cut that has been made and the 33% cut to staff. I'm going to work on it. I'm going to speak to the Treasurer. If the Premier is speaking to anybody on this side, I'll even speak to the Premier about this. Of course, I'm going to try to help out the Minister of Natural Resources as well, because I think it's important to do so.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I'm glad the member mentioned that. I'm supposed to mention that the Grantham High School reunion is to be held on the long weekend in May at Governor Simcoe Secondary School on Friday night and on Saturday at the Rex Stimers Arena and the Jack Gatecliff Arena combined. There were some members' staff here who went to Grantham High School. It's only \$30 to register—you can still register—and it's going to be a great time for all those who want to take part. I'll even invite members of the Legislature to join us on that occasion.

The Speaker: I thank the members. It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1754.

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